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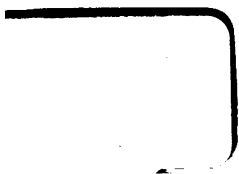
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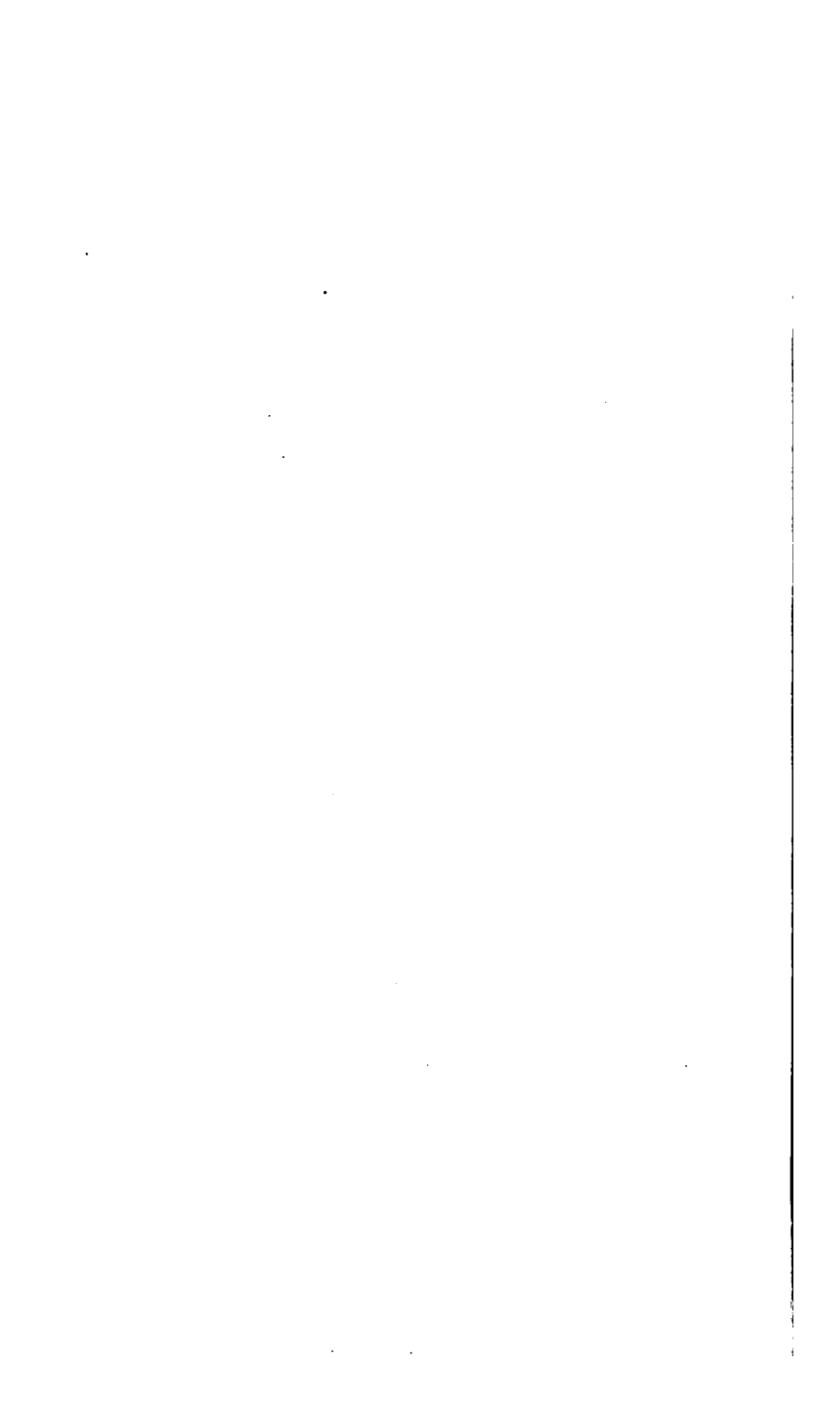
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## **AGONY POINT.**

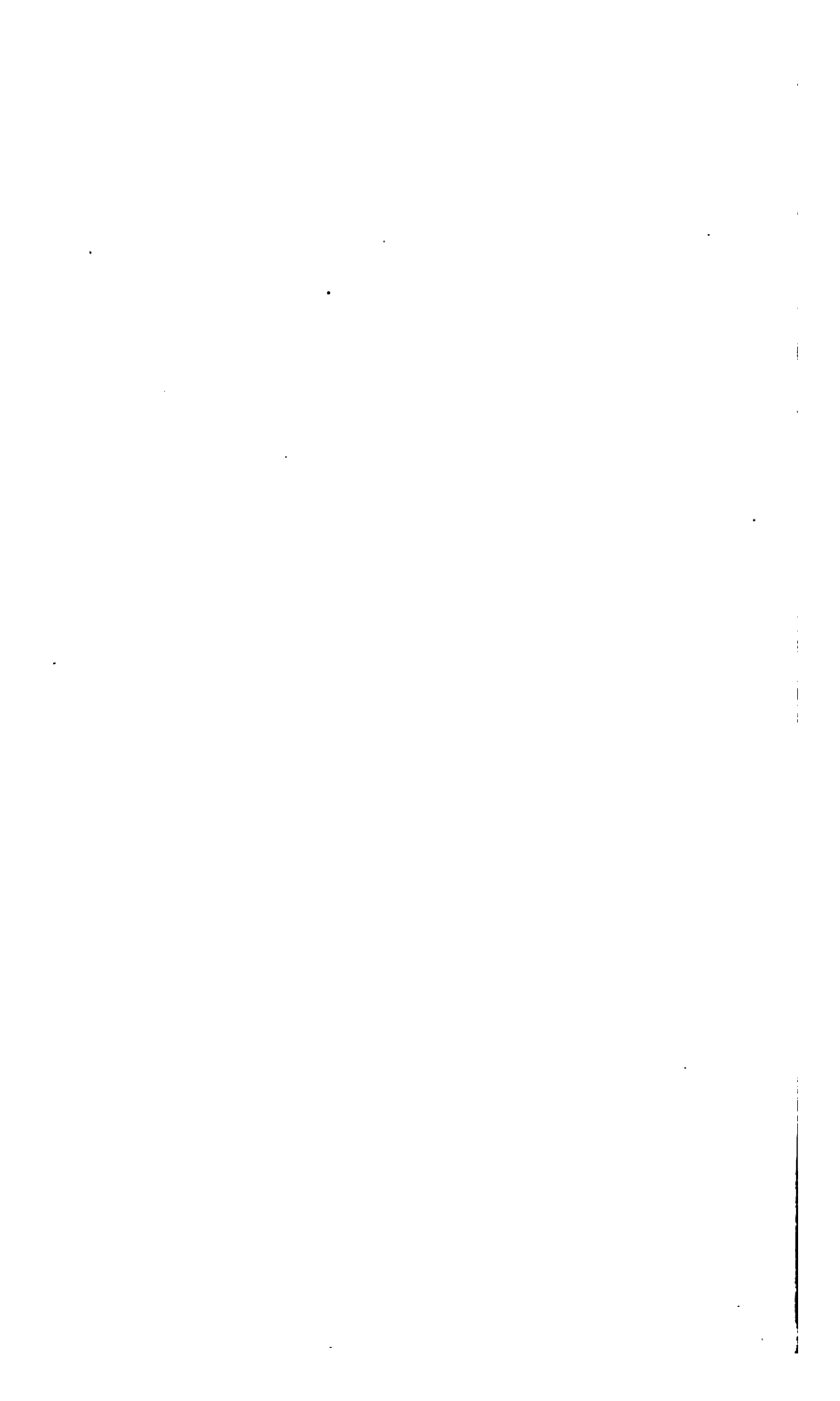




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**AGONY POINT.**

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# AGONY POINT;

OR,

## THE GROANS OF 'GENTILITY.'

BY THE

REV. JAMES PYCROFT, B.A.

TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AUTHOR OF

"TWENTY YEARS IN THE CHURCH," "ELKERTON RECTORY," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

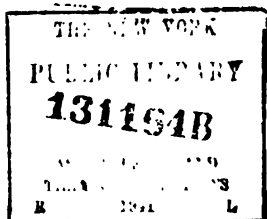
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## PREFACE.

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DR. JOHNSON once exhorted a young man beginning life to regard debt not as an inconvenience, but as a calamity—as that which made all virtues difficult, and some impossible.

Lord Burleigh said, that a man should always calculate his income at only two-thirds of its actual value. No doubt he foresaw that the remaining third would spend itself composedly and gracefully—it would enable us to meet claims on our generosity without starving our feelings—it would take the sting out of many an accident or emergency, without ruffling our tempers or adding to the list of our real misfortune.

The following story may be regarded as a series of sun-pictures : some of the most striking incidents claim to be literally " untouched photographs."

The Author is aware that his own strong feelings, on a subject which is the crying evil of the present day, may burst forth, as stirring truths that will out, at many a pause in the narrative. Still, he trusts that the reader will have no cause to complain that a book which pretends to all the diversion and entertainment of a novel is only a lecture or sermon in disguise.

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## AGONY POINT.

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### CHAPTER I.

TOM LANGLEY — HIS BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND  
EDUCATION.

“IN the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” is a law written, not only in the word of God, but on every page of the book of life. Yes, with the rich man or the poor man, with the peer or the ploughman, it is all the same; though, perhaps, in some cases the one makes trouble, while the other finds it: or, as a very wise man once said, “The difference is often only this: the rich man labours to get an appetite for his dinner, the poor man to get a dinner for his appetite.”

Yet, some persons suppose that the doom of labour is virtually cancelled in these days of dtailed estates and the Three per Cents. Some

suppose that the great use of fathers and forefathers is to do all the drudgery of life for us, and to send us into the world as a happy swarm, more like drones than bees, to live out a joyous span of dreamy, sunny days, on the honey hived for our "gentility."

But this is a very narrow view of things. We may as well plod our weary way up a furrow, as lounge and doze away the slowly-pacing hours on silk and satin. Whether it be the toil of the hands or the head, or the sternly-exacted labour of the sinking heart—whether it be the drop that glistens on the brow of the sun-burnt reaper, while "the valleys laugh and sing" with the yellow-waving of the ripened harvest—or whether it be the drop of agony, wrung from the racking brain of the man of pleasure, when the fiendish venture of dice or debauchery has gone against him, it is all the same—each is equally an instance of the one mighty ordinance and man's primeval doom.

In this way we were reasoning lately with a friend, and even went so far as to challenge him to name one single creature of whose daily life we knew enough to speak with confidence, to whom this law of labour did not in some form most manifestly apply.

"Well, then," said he, "we will take this





law in its widest sense,—that all you enjoy you must, in some sort, work for. If you do no labour, you can enjoy no leisure; or, as the retired counsellor once replied, while walking in Westminster Hall, if he had no term-time, then he had no vacation: but, what will you say of the easy and luxurious life of Mrs. Langley, of Langley Hall?

“Mrs. Langley is as much a slave as any abigail in her whole establishment. For, whether a real or an ideal mistress holds the whip and reins, it little matters; nay, the ideal tyrant is often the more searching and the more dreaded of the two.”

“No one knows how intensely vivid and how real are our delusions,” said a lady from an asylum. And powerful, indeed, is the delusion—awful, indeed, is the spectre—that reigns in Langley Hall. Her name is Mrs. Fashion; own sister to Mrs. Etiquette. She is ever moving from room to room; more rigidly scrutinising than any mistress or any housekeeper, and allows my lady anything but the semblance of a will or way of her own. Yes, Mrs. Fashion it is who claims to arrange the old furniture, or capriciously calls for new, however much the old may suit my lady better. Mrs. Fashion orders the carriage, and determines the drives that they

shall take, or the calls to be made: though oftentimes my lady, when she comes home, is heard to rejoice,—“ We found them all so nice, and *out*.” Mrs. Fashion also orders the dinners, and the balls, and decides the very guests to be invited—who shall come, and who shall not, albeit my lady would often, in her heart, prefer a quiet evening with some old, yet excluded friend, to all the diamonds and gay dresses that are to do her credit in the *Morning Post*.

Thus does Mrs. Fashion cruelly domineer all through the winter in my lady’s country-house; but now the days have lengthened, and now the crocus, the primrose, and the violet, and many a swelling bud, on many a favourite plant, morning after morning tempt my lady to beguile some hours in her garden, or her conservatory. Already she sees a vision—some few weeks quickly fled—of clustering roses, flaming plots of verbena, or of geraniums—amidst velvet lawns and verdant groves. But soon the hard-hearted Mrs. Fashion once more steps in, and reminds her that, just as at a morning pantomime daylight gives way to gas, so, in the farce and falsetto of this world’s drama, the balmy air of spring must yield to city smoke—the singing of birds to the dull, ceaseless sound of rolling wheels—and the happy, the

cheering, the enjoyable hours of day seem to serve only as an intrusion that defers the fancied pleasures of the night.

Arrived in London, once more my lady encounters the same arbitrary mistress. Arbitrary? Why, my lady's waiting-maid had long since given warning rather than submit to such petty and persevering interference with all her little favourite ways and fancies. So, at this daily and hourly tyrant's bidding, she submits to join "the maddening crowd's ignoble strife"—strife and emulation in caps, and gowns, and trinkets—strife and emulation in equipage and liveries, in china, glass, and new French dishes—besides squeezing at the door or the landing-place of suffocating drawing-rooms: for which melting and squeezing the faintest sentiment of the *ton* can often be the only possible reward.

Surely some unsophisticated reader will ask, And what is the fearful penalty under which the lady of so much wealth and independence is bound to obey this despotic Mrs. Fashion? The penalty is, that of the poor Hindoo—there is a certain mysterious idol, all jewels without and all hollow within, that she must fall down and worship—certain forbidden things and persons she must not touch, handle, or approach, all through fear of loss of caste!

Let us not be supposed to deny that there is an order of society in which the said Mrs. Fashion is the handmaid, not the mistress. There are those of natural grace, with whom all is ease and composure—whose taste and intuitions are their only law, and who do simply as they please: but we are not speaking of the serener altitudes, but of the region next below; being well assured that there can be no affectation where all is genuine and nothing to affect.

It is wonderful how happiness is qualified in this world. The ancient Greeks had an idea that there was a certain Nemesis, a certain invidious deity, ever ready to dash down mortal man from the giddy height of his prosperity, or to mix some bitters into his choicest cup. This myth was no doubt founded partly on an instinctive feeling akin to humility. Perhaps it was also founded on long experience of the fact, so well expressed by that great writer, who said, {  
"Wherever there is Pleasure, we may be sure  
that Pain is not far off."

Indeed, happiness in man is something like perfect tune in an instrument. A happy man is a man in tune, with his feelings and affections all in tune; to say nothing of his health and spirits, and all that complexity of the nervous system, so delicate, that the strings of ten thou-

sand pianofortes, all in one, are as nothing in comparison.

But, added to the fact, that the more capable of pleasure, the more sensitive of pain, it seems as if Providence designs that, in the race of this life, certain persons, otherwise calculated to bear every prize away, should carry so much dead weight. Accordingly, Lady Langley had a very quietly-disposed husband, who was some twenty years older than herself. He was a good kind of man, and she had no cause to complain; only, a lady of fifty with a gentleman of seventy naturally finds that "only twenty years," a difference so little felt some twenty years before, becomes a serious hindrance, when the lady is still too young to see the reasonableness of early hours, and find her chief resources in her home.

They also viewed things differently—when her ladyship's visions were most gorgeous, the gentleman's matter-of-fact comment would reduce them to thin air. Oftentimes he would breathe a cold current, that would most effectually lower the rising temperature of her sanguine feelings; while Hope, Romance, and Imagination in vain would purple the landscape of the future: for, by some cold and joyless observation, he would ruthlessly reduce it to the bleak and blank reality of the past.

However, one advantage that accrued to the lady from this May-and-December alliance was, that when the gentleman's nerves were at their weakest, the lady's energies still remained at their strongest: and, just as the hardiest sailor, said a traveller, could not be induced to stand a second shock of the electric eel, so to renew a marital contest which is felt to jar on the whole nervous system, this Mr. Langley—like many another man, bold enough at any fair trial of his courage or endurance—dreaded above all mortal things.

On such occasions he would put his hand to his ear, and say "Hush—I can't stand it:" and so, gradually, he settled all his power and opinions upon the lady, and contented himself with a running commentary of half-audible grumbling, most ominous of dire results, always ending with "But it is no use for me to speak—so, anything for a quiet life!"

One of the chief points in which Mr. Langley differed from his wife was, the education of his son Tom. We say nothing about so ordinary a question as, Classical compared with English education: for as to Latin and Greek, the father believed in it religiously, as he did in Church and State, and many other things on which he, and nine out of ten of his neighbours, happened to be

right, though for reasons that happened to be wrong.

No, it was not the teaching but the training—it was the bringing up, or the spoiling of the boy, as he maintained: it was all that was indicative of the future of Master Tom, and “the notions that the mother and sisters were putting into his head,” to which Mr. Langley was wise enough to take exception, most clearly seeing, as he did, that this must be one day all unlearned, and that too amidst the smarts and sorrows, “the whips and scorns” of that great school, where even bullying and fagging are allowed—that cruel school of hard lessons and many classes, and where all are on the alert, profiting by our blunders and snapping at our places—yclept “The wide, wide World!”

“If,” Mr. Langley would say, “if the boy cannot keep a penny in his pocket now—if he is never to say ‘No’ to himself or others—if in the flexible days of youth it is to be all self-indulgence and no self-denial—if the whole aim of the girls is to spoil the boys—what, in the name of common sense, will become of him? That ‘iron sinew,’ the unruly will, no more will bend in later life when habits are stereotyped, and when affections try the better part, and passions try the worse, and when perhaps he has a wife

and children, like mine, to cajole and worry him into folly, by fretting at his very heartstrings and availing themselves of every weakness, to betray the strength and prudence of the man !”

In this way Mr. Langley used to reason : and after thus wisely expatiating, and entering this very sensible protest in volumes of thin air, he would hand over the disputed pocket-money for his wife to send to school, and enjoy the report of the boy’s fun and frolic and the happiness of youth, which, he then said, it were cruelty to spoil—just as much as if he knew no better.

All this will be enough to show, that Tom Langley was brought up much like other boys—that in Mr. Langley’s family the son was everything, the daughters nothing—indeed, it seemed taken for granted as a thing of course, in Mr. Langley’s family, that it is quite happiness enough for the girls to enjoy the reflected sunshine of the boys : who are to grow up basking in ease and luxury, evincing their amability chiefly in uniting the offices of Solicitor-General and Receiver-General in their own pampered and greedy persons.

So, if Tom was selfish as a boy—if he grew up like most other boys, expecting that all the world would take him at the family valuation, and deem his will and pleasure of the same su-



preme importance—all this crop of errors—like so many nettles in his side and briars in his path—was the natural produce of the seed his mother and sisters conspired to sow.

But was not this corrected at school? Unfortunately our hero had not the benefit of a public school, and he lived at a date at which the present humanitarian system of sparing the rod and spoiling the child had already been established.

Public opinion had already decided, that no master who would not risk being placarded as a brute in the local newspaper, by giving a supposed cut too much, and positively ruined by a character for severity, can safely resort to that alternative, without the fear of which (as the Duke said of flogging in the army), no secondary punishment, and therefore no discipline, can possibly be enforced.

Consequently, at Tom's school, intellectually, instead of being whipped up to the master's pace, all the boys went their own : while morally, the master only sighed and shut his eyes when great offences were committed, painfully conscious that it was better to be supposed not to recognise than to be known not to punish, as their evil deeds deserved.

This—which is the hard fate of nearly all

the youths of England, apart from the public schools, was a severe loss to Tom, because at a school like Eton the inexorable law that compels "a fellow" to quicken his paces, to mind his "absences," and be ready with his lessons—all this, implying a several act of self-denial in the zest of boating or of cricket, and a several act of self-command to bend the divided mind to a task the more unpalatable, the more improving, nine or ten times a-day—of this we may truly say, that this is a state truly favourable to the self-control and command required at every turn in the road of life.

## CHAPTER II.

**TOM LANGLEY HAVING BECOME QUITE HIS OWN MASTER, SEES A LITTLE OF LONDON LIFE—THE READER ALSO SEES A LITTLE OF HIS DOINGS THERE.**

WE must now in our biography, as we must do very commonly in life, be satisfied to lose sight of the boy for nine or ten years, and to break in upon him once more in his chambers in the Albany—his father and mother dead, and himself possessed of 800*l.* a-year, and arrived at the critical age of twenty and six years.

The occasion to which my memory more vividly recurs was an early breakfast on the Derby day. The party consisted of four or five young men, enjoying, or rather too much exhausted and “used up” to enjoy, the London season. This was evident from their pale looks, their drooping eyelashes, and the general apathy of their expression.

Indeed, to be moved by nothing—to be excited by nothing—and to be interested or

highly delighted by nothing—but rather to vote everything slow, everything a bore, and everything a weakness in the healthy mind that happens to be able to enjoy it; this is the fashion of London life: for, just as the fox that left his brush in the trap, wanted all other foxes to part with their honours too, so the many fashionable people who have exhausted all spirits to enjoy, expect all other persons to affect the same listless exhaustion and apathy as themselves.

But, there was also one gentleman present at the breakfast party, with green coat and brass buttons, white cords, top-boots, and a fancy blue-and-yellow tie—in point of age, we should say, a very young man for forty—who seemed to be at the very height of happiness; so much so, indeed, that, as he carried on a running fire with all the youngsters aforesaid, he gradually made them sparkle up and effervesce with some of his own happy buoyancy of spirits.

This gentleman proved to be Mr. Frederic Audrey, who was Mr. Langley's family solicitor—a keen man of business, with a keen relish for pleasure; a man who boasted of having a good hunter in his stable, and a good managing clerk in his office—neither being of much use to him, were it not for the service of the other.

Fred Audrey's history is soon told. His father

had given up to him a very small business, and he had made it a very large one ; which business, indeed—though a shrewd and respectable man was Fred Audrey—had been made not by virtue of brilliant talents, or of heroic honesty ; because, though we fully allow that, all the world over, a clear head and conscience are beyond all price, still it must not be forgotten, that while one of these qualities proves most repulsive to the fools and the other most forbidding to the knaves, they form a very questionable stock in trade, for a rapid rise at least, in any small town in England. More—far more—is done by a good-humoured countenance and cheerful tone of voice—by something imposing in the manner, and positive in the opinion—than by qualities of more sterling kind. In business, body helps sometimes as much as brains, and we really doubt whether, taking the world as it is, a jolly fellow or a genius would have the better chance of customers or clients.

At all events, as regards our friend, it was quite as much by his looks as his learning that he had become the agent of half the estates around, with the reputation of keeping an office into which every man who went in a flurry or a passion came out feeling as if he were the better for some sedative or cooling emulsion.

Fred Audrey knew that people go to lawyers as they do to doctors or father-confessors—from an inclination to relieve their minds and to ease their fears, and sometimes to be assisted in their resentment. Why, there was old Chilham, a lawyer in the same town: he had no chance at all against Audrey, being afflicted with an ominous face like a dooms-man, in which men could read strange matters—a nervous client had been known to walk up and down, like a boy with a toothache, three or four minutes before he had the courage to go in, and after all to come out worse. Tom had himself said, when once in a scrape, that he could as soon unbosom to the old Governor himself as to old Chilham, who always showed his knowledge of the law by parading all the pains and penalties he could think of, saying as the very first thing, “I am very sorry, sir, but do you know what you are liable to?”

Not so Fred Audrey: nature made him happy to start with, and his happy looks gave him that prosperity which made him happy again. He worked hard and rode hard, and sometimes, though short of excess, he drank hard; and since a happy face in a party, with a merry-ringing, cheerful voice, and a laugh for everything and everybody, makes all the difference of plenty of

light and a blazing fire at a winter's dinner-party, Fred Audrey was a general favourite; and Tom very naturally, at the winding up of his late father's affairs, made this man of business promise to come up to his chambers and join a party with a four-in-hand drag for the ensuing Derby.

Such was Fred Audrey.

The young fellows wanted no introduction. Nothing recommends a middle-aged man more to the young than when he combines with the good sense and experience of age what is most rare, a thorough interest and sympathy for youth.

"I begin to think the business-men are right, after all," said Captain Kitson of the Guards. "When they have a holiday, it is a holiday indeed. Bless me, sir! to you this seems like breaking-up day to a boy."

"Certainly, sir; holidays must be fairly and honestly earned, or they can never be thoroughly and heartily enjoyed."

"And then, if you spend money to-day you can lay on some more six-and-eightpences to-morrow; but with us—eh?"

"All going out and nothing coming in, gentlemen! Well, that makes a difference—touching capital whenever at a loss. Yes, it is rarely a man replaces the stock, and rarely he finds money to redeem his mortgage. I have no doubt,"

he said sllily, "some of you gentlemen will admit the probability of this?"

More than one, by a quiet laugh, pleaded guilty to the very weakness that the lawyer had so significantly hinted.

"And what the end of all this will be I don't know," said one of the party. "It is indeed so true that everything does keep on going out, and nothing does keep on coming in again."

"Don't know, you say, sir; but I do," said Audrey. "I see the working of it every day that I live. My opinion is, that the world nowadays is too genteel by half. It is Men-of-labour *versus* Men-of-leisure; and it is very plain which side must win. The bees are driving out the drones. Estates are daily coming to the hammer, and some Manchester spinner, with a pocket full of money, walks coolly into the auction-room and outbids all the county!"

"And pray, Mr. Audrey," said Tom, "what is the remedy for all this?"

"WORK! The first thing is Action, the second thing is Action, and the third thing is Action. Work to keep what you have; for idle men come to grief, and every scrape costs money. Work to enjoy what you have; for all pleasure ends in no pleasure at all: and, Work to eat more before a family makes it less."



"What, then! are there to be no gentlemen in the land?—Why, what is Old England coming to?"

"There is no fear of that, Mr. Langley, only there is such a thing as working our 'gentility' a little too hard. Now, take your own case, for instance. Your grandfather drove a coach-and-four, your respected father drove a pair, and——"

"Ha! ha!" interrupted young Dashly, from the other end of the table; "Master Tom must be satisfied with a one-horse chaise with a head up!"

"Positively, Langley, you must stick to work, and be punctual at chambers," cried another. "You must eat your dinners a little more regularly at Lincoln's Inn, otherwise your progeny will come down to a tax-cart or a wheelbarrow."

"I really meant rather to be illustrative than personal," said the man of business, as he held his plate for some muffins; "but you, gentlemen, and I are coming to the same point; though what I complain of is, that men do not come down to the tax-cart—that they do not take to any money-making and useful calling while a little apital remains to help them out, and——"

"But fellows are brought up to professions retty often, I think," drawled out Grinfield,

who had been lounging with one leg over the arm of an easy-chair smoking a cigar—"too seedy," as he said, "to eat any breakfast." "I was prudentially intended for something or other, I forget what, but I would not have it at any price."

"What a pity to be sure, Grinny!" said the Captain; "you'd have been an ornament to any profession, you would!"

"A profession, I think you said, sir," interrupted Audrey; "but professions and profits are two things wide enough asunder nowadays. Why, you know, in the army, gentlemen, the pay is only——"

"Under five shillings a-day for a sub," cried the Captain.

"Well, then, that doesn't pay. Again, at the Bar, my friend here, reckoning his labour as nothing for the first seven years, may chance to make a few hundreds afterwards."

"Then that doesn't pay," said the Baronet; "the horse starves while the grass is growing."

"Certainly not; and all the revenues of the Church do not pay interest on the education-money of the clergy."

"Then, what do people do it for?" cried Harwood. "For, a profession must be a horrid bore. There is Dalton, who cannot come to th

Derby, having some deluded couple's marriage-settlement to draw."

"There are some prizes, no doubt," said Audrey, "only, people pay too much in proportion to the many blanks in these lotteries. And no wonder; for all idle gentlemen, though indifferent to profits, crowd and help to starve the professions, just as all distressed ladies crowd and help to starve the otherwise well-paid seamstresses and governesses."

"And do you mean to say that any really decent people are ever starving?" said Tom.

"There is not much appearance of it just hereabouts, certainly," replied the lawyer, to whom everybody was offering everything which was on the well-covered breakfast-table at the same time—the truth was, he was glad to escape from too much of a politico-economical lecture—"but our really 'genteel' people always make a point of starving themselves last. They starve, perhaps, first their lawyer, then their doctor—we can, of course, live upon air," said he, patting the rotundity of his fashionable waistcoat—"then, they begin to starve their friends. Why, the Hanways kept back a severe family affliction, to my certain knowledge, till their spring fashions were worn out and it was their turn for a dinner-party. Then they starve their tailors,

their milliners, and pastrycooks, and some of the small fry—and, all the time, their hearts and affections are daily starved and pine away for want of exercise: and after putting generosity on short commons, simple justice dies a natural death; and so they hang on, *appearing still very grand and 'genteel:' but, all the time most MEAN and MISERABLE.*"

These were, indeed, strong and emphatic words: the man spoke feelingly. Lawyers are admitted behind the scenes, and Audrey had all his life seen grandeur and "gentility" without, with meanness and misery within.

There was one at least of the company who could never forget these emphatic words.

One use of a proverb or a terse and pointed saying is, that it serves as a kind of portable soup, to be diluted and used at pleasure. Such little pellets of truth in a small compass will often remain jingling in the mind, with a germ of practical wisdom ready to expand more and more fully with the changing seasons of an eventful life.

Of course much more than I have here described was said at this sporting breakfast; but I forbear to chronicle the childish inanities, the affected tones, and listless expletives which characterise the conversation of those—of all men

the most pitiful—the victims of languor and lassitude, of shattered nerves and sinking hearts, killing time without enjoying it, and all from a mistaken view of pleasure.

These young men had yet to learn, that with the human lyre nothing produces more painful discord than harping only on one set of strings.

The best illustration we have ever heard of the aching void and restless feeling of fashionable and dissipated life, is suggested by the reputed excuse of a lazy negro in the West Indies:—

"Why can't you work, Sambo?"

"Me very bad, massa."

"What's the matter with you, Sambo?"

"Massa, me skin hurt me all over."

And now two or three more young men, duly Derby-fied, with blue veils, zephyr coats, and a telescope, came stamping into the room. They had left the drag in Piccadilly, and Fortnum and Mason were putting up the hampers: the whole party were ready except the two Fosters, and they were to get up at Hyde Park Corner.

One thing that I observed was, that these men had all some kind of joke for my friend Tom, which plainly showed me, as it did Frank Audrey—and this he significantly expressed to

me by a rapid glance across the table—that Tom Langley, if not actually the butt of the party, was at all events deemed rather a slow fellow.

Yet Tom Langley was not a slow fellow: only, in the race of London life he had not as yet, like divers of his friends, parted with certain heavy weights, such as prudence, self-respect, and scruples of conscience—all of which are a very serious impediment to what is called “going the pace,” or “being a fast man.”

This observation we had afterwards an opportunity of confirming by rather an interesting incident, as we waited about ten minutes for those provokingly unpunctual men, the two Fosters, at the top of Grosvenor Place.

For, this happy morning of the Derby happened to be the time for admitting and discharging patients from St. George’s Hospital; and never did we see so striking a contrast of happiness and misery—never did we see such personifications of pleasure and pain—running, as it were, in two streams side by side, as on that exciting occasion.

We may be allowed to call it exciting indeed, for, what Londoner has not seen the motley throng of vehicles—from the well-appointed barouche, with smart postilions, deter-

mined not to be cut out or passed upon the road, down to the omnibus loaded inside and out, and the Hansom's cabs, and even the huckster's cart, all wheeling round Hyde Park Corner in one ceaseless stream of joyous and happy rivalry? Every carriage is so laden with hampers, that the scene looks like all the world's pic-nic going to meet on Epsom Downs.

On the day in question, this animated throng was passing so rapidly and so merrily down the hill, that our party began to feel slow with a vengeance; and every minute they vowed that they would wait no longer; "only, Jerry Foster was the best fun going," and "his brother Nat had all the names for the sweepstakes in his pocket."

But, meanwhile, an hospital surgeon stepped up to our drag good-humouredly, and said, "Come, gentlemen, you don't look as if you wanted any bones set just yet, whatever you may want before it is dark to-night; so, please to move on, and give these poor souls room to draw up a little nearer."

Then our attention was first directed to two or three cabs behind us; slowly putting down at the hospital door their painful freight of human misery.

One pale, emaciated fellow, was lifted from

the cab by a tall, strong porter, who took him up in his arms tenderly, like a child, and a second porter joined hands with the other on the other side of the patient, and away they bore him, cleverly and easily, as in a chair, while his poor mother was trying to keep her hand to support his head, and so to perform woman's wonted part in smoothing the sufferer's pillow.

Next, a poor girl was seen to stop and sit down on the steps, too faint at first to walk up, while another girl stood by and fanned, and cooled her face with the corner of her shawl.

After this we saw some men and women, pale and wan, coming down the steps—these were patients discharged. They seemed a little giddy at first, and as if glad to inhale the morning air, while gazing in curiosity and half-bewildered at the throng, and, perhaps, painfully doubting where to go, or what to do next. Indeed, one man said, in reply to Fred Audrey, that he had received three shillings "from that box"—pointing to the box for "discharged homeless and in need," in the wall—"and that was every farthing he had in the world; whereupon, Fred Audrey slipped a little more into his hand.

This conversation was interrupted with a "By your leave, sir," and behold "a casualty,"



as the porter called it, which proved to be a mason fallen from a scaffold, who was borne along on a shutter with a bundle of shavings under his head; with him, too, a poor woman followed—always a woman with every sufferer!—and she was vainly trying, though convulsed with sobbing, to chafe his hand as it drooped motionless over the litter.

“Hang these Fosters!” cried Sir Edward Alex, a man who was said not to have been at all a bad kind of fellow once, though vice and gambling had petrified every better feeling. “Hang these Fosters! I say—to be kept waiting here, above all, amidst such painful sights as these!”

“Then, in way of doing something, I propose a sweepstakes,” said Audrey.

“Well done! anything to look like business,” said this cool and fashionable specimen of London life. “What is it to be?”

“Why, half-a-crown a-head all round for that poor woman, who, perhaps, hasn’t a penny next Saturday night, now the bread-winner, her good man, is crippled, if not dead.”

“Well done, Audrey!” said Tom, putting his hand into his pocket; and then he added,—

“Here, I say, porter—here, don’t go away,

there will be some money for that poor woman who went in last."

"For the wife of the casualty—eh, sir?"

"Yes, all right."

"I'll be glad to attend to it."

Hereupon, of course, the Baronet looked surprised; and, though not altogether averse, he was heard to say something like, "Slow fellow, that Langley—all humbug—stuff and nonsense!"

"Keep them to it," said Audrey, in a whisper, nudging Tom in the side; so, off comes his own hat—"in the way," as he said, humorously, "of a hat for the halfpence," to be handed round.

Hereupon, all the men in the drag—some cheerfully, and some to follow the custom, handed the silver across the coach; and just at that time the Fosters came up and joined liberally in the movement. So, about forty shillings were soon collected for the poor, broken-hearted wife.

Tom took the money, and as he handed it to the porter he whispered something, which afterwards proved to be a message that the address of the patient should be sent to him next day to the Albany.

And now all were ready, and off we drove : neither is it pretending to know too much if we say, that Langley and his friend Audrey derived gratification from more sources than one on that Derby day.

Who can describe a Derby day ?

Some very excellent people would say, that it was no proper subject for our pen. Some very excellent people can think of a race-course only as a vile and baneful sphere for the fiendish and demoniacal passions of the black, blaspheming gamester, and only as the common haunt of the midnight murderer, Thurtell, or the cold-blooded poisoner, Palmer.

Others have painful and lawless associations, with drinking-booths, and gipsies, and all those migratory and predatory tribes, screaming "correct cards" and ballads—sounds which, issuing from the lips of their sun-burnt, unblushing sisters, we freely admit may be allowed to jar on the purer sensibilities of delicately-nurtured ladies, reared in all the elegance of Belgravia, and as unused to the bold looks and untutored habits of these children of desert England, as they are to the wild gestures and outlandish garb of wandering Arabs or Spanish brigands.

But, never mind : the sight of your fellow-creatures will do you no harm, my dears ; for,

even as a certain good man used to cry after the trembling felon in the Tyburn cart, "There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God!" so may our fair sisters learn to look with pity and indulgence on those who never knew a mother's or a pastor's care—children of the sunless alley or the wild heath; and so may they, with humble gratitude, reflect, in the words of their nursery hymn,—“This is but a picture of what I might be.”

It is only right and reasonable to remember that fairs and races do not create such poor creatures; they only call them forth, and that, too, from dark dens and hovels, to the open light of day. And who knows but they may imbibe more of good from our purer and better influences, than we need derive from them of evil? And as to the gambling of the Derby day—although we painfully feel that no vice as often as gambling has heated and hatched into life the viper brood of vengeful and devilish feelings, no vice is so virulent or so active a destroyer of all that is holy and even human in the heart of man—yet few, indeed, of the noblemen and gentlemen of large estates, who own racers, join in this old English sport with any view to profit; and, as to arguing not from the use but from the abuse of any national institu-

tion, I know nothing that can be said to close Epsom Downs, that would not equally shut up the Stock Exchange. Therefore do we claim to name with interest and satisfaction the great Londoners' holiday, the Derby day.

"It is worth anything to see the road," said Fred Audrey, as he pointed first of all to a Grosvenor-place housemaid, fired by the Derby excitement, from a window up three-pair of stairs; while children on all sides were flattening their little noses against the glass, gazing with all their eyes at the motley throng, in which the green-grocer's daughter and the poulterer's man looked quite as happy in their dirty cart, as any of our friends in their well-appointed drag.

"There! there!—look there again!" cried Audrey, when passing Clapham Common; "every house has a party to see the people go to Epsom. At every green railing are chubby faces grinning between the bars. Ay, and look at those two urchins up there,—one has got astride of the 'Finishing Academy' board, and the other has got Britannia round her neck!"

"Oh yes, sir!" said Nat Foster: "the whole road is all alive; those who don't go extract a little pleasure, as well as those who do. The Derby serves like an electric battery, to give

a vivifying shock to half a million people at least, counting all, both far and near. Talk about the sin of it, indeed! Why, every man of forty thousand gives, comparatively, bail for his good behaviour, from the time he starts to the time he comes home again; and as to the virtues, there is more good-humour, and kindly feeling, too—just as there is more champagne and rhubarb wine flying and sparkling about—on the Derby day, than there is on any other day a Cockney knows, hardly excepting Christmas.”

“Yes,” said the Infant—for so they called him: he was six feet two in his shoes, and stout withal—Foster’s brother, fresh from the bank of Hatherly & Co., in Lombard Street. “And thousands of hard-worked clerks and City men are crowded on those cheap omnibuses; men who, but for Epsom, would never know anything more enlivening than the Gravesend boat from one year’s end to the other.”

The said Infant and Fred Audrey—such is the congeniality and freemasonry between all men of sense—soon appeared to fraternise together. They could naturally find something better worth talking about than the idle topic of men like Grinfield; the mere gaudy butterflies of a summer’s day—creatures who can exist

only in the sunshine, and quickly drop before the clouds of life.

And now Audrey had little difficulty in corroborating his own suspicions as to the chances and prospects of his friend, Tom Langley, supposing that he long continued in so "fast" a set. He therefore kindly resolved, when this day was past, to take measures and to advise him accordingly.

We need not follow our hero all the way to Epsom and back, we proposed only to say enough of this Derby expedition to give a glimpse of the life that Tom was leading, as also the very unprofitable kind of company he kept; and when we add, that next day Tom gave still further assistance to the poor woman whom he had seen at the hospital door—her suffering husband died that night—it will readily be understood, that if Tom Langley was, indeed, "too slow" for his company, he was decidedly fit for better things.

Still, we do not commit ourselves so far as to say that Tom was at that time fit for *much* better things. No; Tom had been brought up selfish, and was, to some extent, selfish still.

! we mean is, that a life of riot and self-indulgence had not in his case bound in icy fetters that genial stream which, in men like Fred

Audrey, gushed warm and glowing from the heart. Certainly, Tom had still a soul to feel for others : but, where there is no active exercise and practice of benevolence to keep our generous feelings in a healthy state, why, then the heart, which grows more and more callous every time its throbbing is disregarded, soon finds that, however kind by nature, it has rather more than it has learnt to do.

Tom was at that time one of those who give what costs them nothing in time or trouble. He was one of those full-grown children who would offer any one a bite of his cake, till he had once found out that he thereby made it less. Still, Tom generally lived like one both kind and hospitable ; he scorned little, mean, and shabby ways ; he returned every man's invitation ; he would fee their servants, scatter toys among their children, and enjoy both the comfort and reputation of an open hand and open heart.

However, it must not be supposed from these nice distinctions that we are among the number of those who are fond of administering an occasional table-spoonful of that cold-drawn philosophy which reduces all actions to mere selfishness. In that school of philosophy it is commonly overlooked, that it makes all the difference what kind of a self, whether a warm-hearted self or a co.



hearted self,—and by what kind of homage, whether it be by a neighbour's good or by a neighbour's ruin, that we try to please that self aforesaid;—so, the question resolves itself into a question of words after all: but all we mean is, to discriminate between the active virtues of those who have so often to “pity the sorrows of ‘some’ poor old man,” with food, fuel, or flannel waistcoats, and the more lazy philanthropy of others, who live where the beadles forbid all rags and tatters “to pass betwixt the wind and their nobility,” and where all the abodes of misery are regarded as under the strictest quarantine.

Tom was a fair specimen of this kind of growth. As to going through that regular course of training which Audrey could tell of, with all his kindlier virtues in good wind and limb, this is a kind of discipline and heart-tuning which few London men have ever known, though we are happy to say we could name exceptions.

Next morning at breakfast, before Audrey left, he began to have a little quiet conversation with his young friend and client.

He soon found that Tom's supposed reading for the Bar was a mere pretext for a luxurious idon life. Tom was one of those who was d of the “romance of the Forum:” he had haps an ambition to come forth as a showy

speaker. He could tell endless anecdotes of clever counsel, and would dilate with much enthusiasm on the tears that an Erskine or a Scarlett had been known to draw from judge and jury, and all the court, even to the very beadle at the door.

Besides this, Tom had once joined a debating society, and enjoyed like others nothing half so much as the sound of his own voice; but, the lawyer soon explained that this had as little to do with life at the Bar, as the handsome uniform and all the sensations of a ball-room had to do with the duties of a Brigadier. No, he said, it was the plodding and persevering man—the man always at chambers, always crammed with the minutest points of his brief,—it was the safe man and the sound man, the man not to be tripped up, like your dashing speaker, by a short but telling question from the Bench—this alone was the character who ever obtained the position to gratify that taste or ambition as the last point and as the casual episode in legal life, which with Tom was first and foremost—all in all—this everything, and all else mere drudgery.

“Then,” said Tom, “if this is the case, with my independent views of things—for, a solicitor must wait my convenience if he brought me a brief—I must tell him that, and I never cou

be tied to my chambers when anything was going on : for instance, when there was a good cricket-match at Lords', or when any shooting or hunting could be had——"

"I understand you perfectly—certainly not," was the reply ; "you would take things easy, of course : besides, not one man in three at the Bar ever earns enough to pay his expenses ; and you, I think, have not anything like a first-rate attorney connexion either?"

"What! and is there no doing without that?"

"Certainly not, nowadays — scarcely one man in ten would have a chance without it—perhaps a Follett or a Denman might draw out, like one horse from the crowd at Tattenham Corner, run in up-hill and distance all the field : but I am speaking now of average talent. I can assure you that all the first solicitors in town have a son for the Bar, as regularly as a man with good interest has a son for the Church : and if not, they at all events keep all their briefs for the man who marries their daughter. —Why, Miss Marshfield of the Temple, or Hilton's daughter of Old Broad Street, could pick and choose out of half the rising young men of all the Inns of Court!"

Here there was a pause.

Tom did not like the idea of being thus stunted in his affections, and limited to any Miss Julia Redtape or Miss Eliza Sheepskin, so he soon arrived at Audrey's desired conclusion, that to follow the law, with so little chance of ever overtaking it, was a foolish waste of time and money too; and at the same time, in the way of confirmation, he drily remarked, that he did once hear of an Irish barrister, who said he owed his destination to the Bar entirely to the fact of there being a very lucrative Chancery suit in the family, so his father brought up one son to earn back some of the fees!

"And, apart from the law," asked Audrey significantly, "is London life—I mean, all that kind of society we saw yesterday—is that altogether to your liking?"

"Why, really," said Tom, "now you ask me, though I never did put the question to myself before, some of these men—for instance, the Fosters—I like, certainly: but——"

"In other words, sensible men, who take a useful part in life—London men, with the West-end foppery and falsetto left out of their composition—such men suit you very well; but the style of Grinfield and Sir Edward Alex you find altogether anything but satisfactory?"

"I must confess, Audrey, that you have

very happy way of putting my thoughts and feelings into words; and they do stare upon me very different from their every-day look and complexion, while floating idly through my mind."

"That is what we often find in business," replied Audrey. "A man comes to us full of some piece of folly or knavery, and by the time we have taken it down in the form of instructions he does not like the ugly look of it at all."

"Then let me ask, Audrey, as you have seen something of the world, what did you think of these men? They are men who know life,—wide-awake fellows—men of the world. Eh?"

"Now this is the very thing that they are not, and the very thing they do not know. Know life, indeed! Why, if that poor boy took a comprehensive view of life who wished he could swing on a gate all day and eat fat bacon—if to gluttonise like a pig, to drink like a fish, to smoke like a funnel, to grimace like an ape, to ignore in every look and every feature all that is useful and earnest in life, and to live as a mere senseless block or figure-man—if that is 'knowing life,' why, then I can only say, that out of Bedlam I could hardly find a parallel to such versions of all that is creditable in a proper man."

"Oh! my good sir, you are indeed too severe

now. We must make allowance; we must take men as they are. But, perhaps, you are not quite used to London men?"

"Langley," said Fred Audrey, rather seriously, "it is because I am used to this kind of men—you may see their exact pictures in the caricatures, not much overdrawn—that I speak so emphatically to you. A looker-on sees the game best, and a man must come fresh up from a purer social atmosphere, as I do, to be keenly sensible of that heartless, brainless, soulless state of things by which you are now most evidently surrounded.—Now, it so happens that for three whole years I once saw London practice, and therefore lived in London; nor was there a man upon the coach yesterday to whom I could not name a counterpart, a mere new edition of the same calf-bound volume of bad sense and worse morals, who some twenty years since fluttered as the butterflies of a season, and were then heard of no more, except perchance in some disgraceful suit for insolvency or gambling. Three or four exceptions I could name, and if I remember right they were saved by—yes! they were saved by getting married."

"Married!"

"I mean, that family ties sprang up just in time to snatch them from that sphere (

morbid apathy and headlong ruin into which they fast were sinking; and thus their heart-strings, so long discordant, were gradually tuned, first, perhaps, by a fond depending wife, and love awakening love; next by public opinion, which jogged them at every wrong turn; and then by prattling children, that came to rouse them to some sense of nature's claims on life as a thing in earnest; and as these responsibilities, so weighty and so complicated, gradually opened to their view, their follies shrank aside, and their former fashion and foppery seemed childish in comparison to the now more nearly perfect man.

"Not to preach a sermon, but only to run on with scenes and changes I have known and witnessed, I would say seriously that this is the way that marriage saves, has saved, and ever will save, many a man from a desperate and a profligate career."

Tom Langley now became thoughtful and serious. It was not so much the reasoning of Fred Audrey as the man himself. Earnest, active, and energetic—a man who had enjoyed his holiday and yearned for duty and for home—he was recoiling like a spring to his proper place and part in his daily course; as if labour, duty, and usefulness were life, whilst pleasure beyond he limits of recreation—or, rather, the over-eager

pursuit of pleasure, and draining the cup to its bitter dregs—seemed not like life, but death. Such a man he now could understand was “dead while he liveth,” because all the better feelings which alone yield pleasure, either pure or inexhaustible, soon become dead or dormant in the breast.

Such is an outline of the advice by which Mr. Frederic Audrey, long time the steward and solicitor of the Langley family, endeavoured to save his friend from that most demoralizing of all conditions—the London exquisite and idle man ; or, the Man of Pleasure : which means, in effect, the man who, in the pursuit of pleasure, so far over-reaches himself that his system is always a note too low for any healthy response, or for joining in harmony with any syren’s spell with zest or enjoyment.

And was Mr. Audrey’s advice honoured in the breach or the observance ?

It fared, we shall in due course learn, like most other good and truthful lessons.

If we cast our “seed upon the waters” we must be contented to find it “after many days.” When the witches cried, “All hail, Macbeth ! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor !” these predictions had been powerless had they not dropped like honied words on a congenially ambitious nature



So, there is a time and tide in the life of every man, when what else were windy words strike deep. It seems as if there is a critical moment in the fate of all of us, when the avalanche of vanity and folly is ready to fall; and, before a few more days of nipping, icy selfishness freezes it to its rocky basis, something slight, even as the voice of the peasant, has power to bring it down.

This advice came at a time when, as Young says, "man suspects himself a fool." But, how far it was ordained that the crust of selfishness, which just then was fast creeping over Tom Langley, should be broken up by the influence of softer gales and a more genial sphere, the following pages will disclose.

## CHAPTER III.

TOM LANGLEY SEES A LITTLE MORE OF LONDON  
LIFE—INDEED, HE SEES ALMOST TOO MUCH  
OF IT.

ALL this time Tom Langley was leading the life of a London bachelor—club life, and life in chambers—having nothing to do but that which often proves the hardest of all things to the man who has seriously to set about it; namely, to amuse himself.

We have often thought that Virgil meant to satirise the fine ladies of his day when he makes *Æolus* say to *Juno*,—"It is the labour of thy life, O Queen, to find out something to wish for!" And very hard work it is, too; since desires and gratifications in general, like an appetite and dinner in particular, are things that obey a certain natural pace and progress, and you cannot enjoy the one till you had waited for the other.

Besides the often-wished-for privilege of having nothing to do but to amuse himself, Tom had also the no-less-envied but no-less-questionable blessing of being his own master, and enjoying perfect independence. But, even here, the liberty to play with edged tools or to burn his fingers, without any one to care whether he did or not—that independence of all rule and restraint which allowed him to disturb the order and the harmonious movements of that complicated machinery of the inner man, consisting of affections and passions, as well as heart to throb, nerves to quiver, and brains to ache—even this liberty and this independence, Tom, like many another full-grown child, had begun to feel were things to boast of more than to enjoy.

Independence ! How false is the opinion commonly entertained ! There is not a string by which a thrill of pleasure vibrates to the heart, but serves also as a bond to tie us down ; and the difference between Tom Langley, the independent gentleman, and Fred Audrey, as a specimen of a family man with the cares of business, was simply this : that Tom was tied and bound by the chain of his sins—of caprice, idleness, and luxurious habits ; while Audrey owned the silken bonds of soothing affections, and was also enchained by the satisfaction of

duties well discharged for the benefit of his fellow-creatures.

We are only drawing from a living subject—we are only writing an actual diary of Tom Langley's early life, when we say, that if we looked in upon him in the morning, the day seemed generally as a heavy burthen he had to thrust away before him. Perhaps he had been up late at night, and so had as little appetite for his meal as interest in the opening day.—If we surprised him at noon, the cigar and the newspaper seemed the only resource to hasten or to beguile the slowly-pacing hours.—Later in the day he might be seen riding in the Park, and listlessly forming a solitary unit in that deadly-lively round, where, if gorgeous equipages excite our envy, we have but to look at the joyless faces of many of their owners to reconcile the humble to their lot.

In some fashionable barouche this man of pleasure might occasionally be seen to lounge; and if so, let us hope that he made the very profitable observation, that it seemed like some genteel comedy, for the exclusive amusement, not of the tired and jaded performers long known on the stage of London life, but rather of country cousins, yet fresh and joyous at a new scene, and to thousands of animated

lookers-on. To the latter it is indeed a wondrous sight, hour after hour, to see the moving stream of wealth, and taste, and elegance ; to the former, we can see — by their looks of dull indifference — all keen enjoyment has passed away !

See there that suburban rattle-trap, with father, wife, and two daughters, evidently out for a holiday, and, perhaps, glad to forget their Clapham cheese-shop ! How comes there anything so vulgar, if it be not for the absurdity of the contrast, to intrude on this proud patrician throng ? Never mind ! It is a pleasure, at least, to see some who can enjoy themselves ; so let them alone. We delight to see them feast their eyes on braided liveries, heraldic panels, and plated hammer-cloths. We delight to see them recognise the identical peeresses so lately described in feathers and diamonds in the *Morning Post*, though, perhaps, the old man is disposed to scan with far more interest the make and shape of the finest horses in the land. Let them, therefore, enjoy the pleasure of a longing look, and remember the good fairy and their nursery tale, and think how easily she could change their rats and mice into footmen and coachmen, and their everlasting cheeses into rolling wheels ; and, while imagination conjures up such enchanting visions, it is thousands to one but they

are extracting as much pleasure as the gaudy pageant will afford to the wealthiest of them all.

See here an old lady taking an airing with her lap-dog and coachman, both over-fed and fat alike! See there an invalid, all pale and wan—of course, that is her companion with her back to the horses; and there, again, are some young ladies, fevered and faint with last night's ball, only their mamma insists that they shall try to freshen up their roses for the party now to come; while there, again, goes another carriage, in which no one of the party really wished a drive—"Where can be the pleasure of the same insipid and senseless round, where we know every carriage, and every one that fills it? What young person can endure to be shaken in a box on springs?" Such things have many a time been murmured over the finest equipages in London, when announced as standing at the door. So common is the dispute, which of the young ladies shall be doomed to air the carriage, and exercise the horses, and keep all the machinery of footmen, coachmen, and silver sticks, in proper form and etiquette.

We must not, therefore, laugh at Tom. No; Tom is as wise as the rest. If this is a pleasure, it is the best imitation he knows; and every one calls it such. What, indeed! is not

this high life? Are they not now in London to enjoy the season, and have one "round of pleasure?" No doubt they are; but hereon hangs a tale. It is, indeed, a *round* of pleasure; but if it should happen to be ordained by the just and equal laws of Providence, that pleasure, properly so called, is not to be had in a *round*, but rather that, as Shakspeare says,—“Pleasure by repetition souring turns to pain;” then why should we appear ascetic or satirical, if we simply call attention to this fact, while we proceed to relate that Tom Langley, by the end of the season, “found London slow,” and grew tired of London, which Dr. Johnson once called being “tired of life.” Tom was, therefore, quite in a mood to adopt any new course, were it only for a change.

Thousands will identify themselves with this picture, and perhaps would thank us to tell them how and why their feelings are so craving, restless, and unsatisfied, and so nearly what we have here described.

Then you, my friends, are, to speak philosophically, as we before hinted, a strange piece of “machinery,” made up of heart and head, of mind and feelings, as well as a wonderful complexity of grosser members and finer ones, all in the most near and sensitive depen-

dence on each other. Again, being such a curious and delicate piece of machinery, you will easily believe that you are made like a clock or a musical box, to go in one way, and one way only, to want periodical setting, tuning, or winding up—which indispensable conditions being all duly observed, the result is a certain harmony or happiness of the inner man; otherwise, all feels wrong: you are “out of sorts,” disgusted, and, in short, miserable. Here the mistake you men of pleasure (that is, excuse me, you vapid, bore-voting, pitiable, men of pain) make is this,—you work your feelings too much and your activities too little. By avoiding labour, you virtually avoid all that ‘should tune or regulate or wind you up.

Now Tom had precisely this complaint: he was conscious of a certain unrest, a craving for that which was not, a discontent with all that was—in short, he had strong premonitory symptoms of all not being right within, though, perhaps, he was not as far gone as others at the time we mention.

From the Parks we have more than once followed Tom to his club. Here birds of a feather flock together, and men of congenial tastes fraternise at the same snug table. Here the staid and steady Foster, with earnest lo



and thoughtful brow, might be seen in animated discourse with some well-known Member of Parliament, or with that calm-looking man with the bald head, the writer of the "City article," giving and exchanging financial facts, and hearing early news of financial measures.

For, the Fosters, though at all times friendly with Tom, did not find him quite the man for them: as bees and butterflies do not assort together. Much more frequently did Tom find himself exchanging fashionable commonplaces, the symptomatic expletives of affectation, and the cold suggestions of a selfish and licentious life, with Sir E. Alex and his West-end set.

Dinner being ended, Tom has the choice of billiards, smoking, half-play, or perhaps some evening party, where, being a stranger to nearly all the room, he goes through an absurd imitation of dancing—for no one has room to do much more than jostle together and perform wild revolutions on their own axis—and then goes home in the early morning to his chambers, where the silence of the night, the re-action after excitement, a headache at breakfast-time, and an utter distaste for the day—all this, as he was yet hardened or acclimatised—may fairly supposed to make him think.

Such has been the life of thousands, and if

by the insidious effects of this and other scenes very easy to suppose, the last sparks of conscience and self-respect should at length go out—if all that is generous and kindly should grow cold, and all that is sordid and selfish should insensibly steal upon and paralyze the whole man—and thus, if those who begin as the Tom Langleys, should leave off as the Sir E. Alexes of society, who can be surprised?

But there was occasionally what was termed “a quiet evening” for Tom Langley, and a game of *écarté*, with the Baronet—not, indeed, that they played high cards, the speculative habit of Sir Edward chose a wider field by far: this quiet evening, it would soon appear, was about the most deteriorating and insidious in which any young man can indulge. And this will lead us to enter a little into the history of Sir E. Alex and his peculiar mode of life.

The life of a mere libertine has been often told already, and we have little inclination to sully our pages or to suggest thoughts of an unpleasant kind. Sir E. Alex was rather a man of socialist than of licentious ideas; he was one of those men who sneered at what he termed the “matrimonial theory,” as a thing exploded, an would argue—that is, if ever he troubled himself to argue or to justify anything that fell in wit

his sovereign will and pleasure, which was not very often—that, instead of tying yourself down irrevocably for life, the mere bond of honour or inclination, to last as long as two people are comfortable together, was more convenient by far, especially in days when all the world conspired to make every man spend three times as much, as a married man, as would amply serve for a single one.

Sir E. Alex was one of those men who combine the characters of the man of business and the man of fashion. His cold, impassive nature, with a keen love of money and a life-long habit of making his book and calculating the odds, it was naturally surmised, gave him considerable advantage in making ventures in connexion with the house of his cousins, Messrs. Alex and Sherwood, the well-known East India merchants in Cornhill. This, however, we always suspected to be a mere pretence, and only an ingenious mode of concealing and accounting for certain gains of a far less creditable nature.

The truth was, that “Sir E. Alex, Bart.”—when the name of Alex alone thus happened to bear a very substantial City sound, and respectable association—served as a prefix of some due to the prospectus of any bubble companies. The time of which we are speaking was during

one of those periodical fevers of speculation, which seemed to afford a providential vent and escape for these pent-up riches, which fructify in Railroads and Steamships when scattered, but which would only engender shaky nerves and indigestion, idleness and affectation, with softening of the brain and hardening of the heart, if the heaps were allowed to rise higher and higher.

The cycle in the seasons of wealth, or say, the ebb and flow of the golden stream, appears to be this:—First, want creates industry, and industry riches; but in the next generation riches create both stupidity and covetousness, which in their turn create something more, namely, foolish speculation; and just at the time that refinement would become morbid, pride insufferable, and ‘gentility’ a nuisance, the heap melts or crumbles to pieces. Perhaps the long-headed father, like Dædalus—who would seem mythologically to have invented “kite flying,” and the paper wings of commerce—perhaps he could contrive to keep himself afloat on such new and dangerous pinions: but then his son—like Master Icarus—carrying the paper system a little too far, and not knowing where to stop, comes down with a run. So, men like Sir E. Alex perhaps have a real use in the world, like rats and weasels, inasmuch as by or the knaves to ease them of their money ther

would be no end to the nonsense, the vanity, or the mischief of the fools.

No one, therefore, can be surprised to hear that Tom Langley was soon taken under the special guardianship of Sir E. Alex. Fred Audrey could see this; he knew how to interpret the by-play, however deferential Sir Edward appeared to one who, Audrey feared, might be his easy, too easy dupe.

Neither must we think too lightly of one of Tom's age and inexperience, if he was his dupe: this, fairly considered, must be allowed rather to argue more generosity than less sense, in any man whose confidence had never been abused before. If Tom did not suspect any sinister designs, how should he suspect them? What but a nature itself capable of deceit can, previous to painful experience, impute a dishonest motive or intention to the seemingly free and friendly words of an every-day acquaintance?

Sir Edward Alex occupied apartments within an easy walk of the Albany, in May Fair; where, as we said, he would sometimes invite Tom to pass a quiet hour. On these evenings there was always a third party present—always the same, and a lady, whom the people of the house called Lady Alex, though her real name was Bella Johnson. Her dress was quiet, and her appear-

ance almost lady-like, but the impression made by her looks was rather spoilt when she began to speak : still, she might have passed without observation in much country society.

The first time Tom Langley was introduced, the lady seemed shy and ill at ease, and he said he really felt for her position ; and probably the sympathy he betrayed tended not a little towards winning her confidence, with many marks of preference and attention. He could not but observe, however, that towards Sir E. Alex she evinced anything but confidence : Tom thought he discerned rather the fear and the distance of a dependant, than the ease and the charming composure of—what in Sir Edward's theory she so conveniently replaced—a lawful and a loving wife. On the other hand, the manner of Sir Edward was morose and impatient, which was met by a sullen and sighing, and sometimes, it seemed, by an enduring mood.

The great bone of contention was—and in such false and anomalous positions ever must be—that he was always abroad and taking his pleasure, while she must mope and pine at home. It was in vain that he enumerated drives to Richmond, or tickets for the play, or other s and formal diversions, the difficulty still remaine Such pleasures were no pleasures to her : sl

yearned for society, and sympathy which she could never know. Gentlemen only could be cordial or kind to her, and of them he was jealous : as to ladies, from their presence she shrank and recoiled with a shudder, feeling that from their sympathies she was banished for ever ! and horrible, most horrible is the doom !

For, it is only when the laws of Him who made us are thus set at defiance, that we learn how fearfully and how wonderfully we are made. The happy smile that meets smile again—the gladsome look that can count on as joyous a response—the light and merry heart that is hourly cheered with the sweet music of speech, and thrills and throbs with the honied words of virtuous friendship and of love—these are blessings which, like the sunshine and the shower, we little think of, till those trying seasons when all is turned to censure and disdain, when the rest of life is dark and cheerless, and the whole soul faint.

But Bella Johnson every day was feelingly reminded of the want of that oil of gladness. To her, if ever her thoughts went abroad, all was bleak, ungenial, out of tune and harmony ; while home, home was no home to her—all was suspicion and jealousy, distrust and fear.—To-day perhaps in plenty, but to-morrow houseless !

How easy for him to desert her, and in a moment disappear!—how brittle the tie which should never have been formed, and which had never been acknowledged, and which every friend or relative would ever be urging him to break!—How inevitable the conclusion, that each word of censure or ill-humour, from one too literally her lord and master, bore this stinging, heartless alternative and threat, if the poor creature happened to provoke his jealousy, or to limit his selfish independence!

Such was the life of Bella Johnson: and, lest our sympathy for erring woman should seem to slope the path of guilt, let us give solemn warning that, such will be the life of every woman who ignores the fact, that when unsecured by the laws of marriage, and unprotected by that strong voice of public opinion, by which those laws are upheld, woman is the slave of man, without sympathy for her sorrows, or redress for her wrongs.

As to Sir E. Alex, he was continually irritated at finding that smiles of good humour, or the poorest semblance of love, is that which money cannot buy, being given only as the spontaneous exchange for the unclipped coin of the hear. Every visit of a man like Langley tended to increase his jealousy and discontent; because



her every look, and tone, and attention at the tea-table, served only to show how natural to her was that pleasing and complacent manner, in the presence of another, which she long had ceased to bear towards him.

The difference is easily explained. Tom felt for her position, and looked with unfeigned pity on her : and what woman ever was at a loss to see melting in the eye, or to hear vibrate in the voice, the soft and tremulous accents of a kind and sympathetic heart ?

Still, Bella Johnson had become indispensable to Sir E. Alex. The excitement of his speculating life, and all his City cares and calculations, were too wearying to allow him to take any interest in billiards, or in those amusements by which idle men seek that excitement in the night, of which he had enough, and more than enough, in the day. Still, the deteriorating effects of this alternative were very evident. Her conversation could only be of topics and connexions below the standard of his tastes ; and, as dropping water wears stones, so a continual flow of common ideas and inferior sentiments, aided by all the subtle influences of woman, never failed to degrade and vulgarise the mind of man.

As to the conversation that went on, while Bella sat quiet with her needlework or crochét,

Sir Edward was discoursing on mines, railways and other investments. But Tom was by no means of a temperament just then to catch the fever of speculation. As to his property, it remained in the same safe investments in which it was bequeathed; and "finding business," as he said, "an especial bore, he handed over all that kind of thing to Fred Audrey."

It was in vain that Sir Edward drew him out, and eventually set before him, that all he then received for his money was four per cent, and that it would be the easiest thing in the world to put him in the way of making six, at the least; "indeed a man was very slow, who, in these days, could not make a great deal more." Still, Tom came out with some common-place remark like this: "That some fellows, trying for more, lost all they had, and were utterly sold up: and what did the Duke of Wellington mean, when he told his officers, eager to invest their savings, that "good interest was only another name for bad security?"

Sir Edward, at one time, was rather staggered by these remarks, and thought, for the moment, that Tom was wiser than he seemed, and that he had altogether mistaken his man; but he soon saw that Tom, like others, very perfectly innocent, all the time, of the wisdom

embodied and embalmed in these prudential maxims and shrewd sayings.

But Tom let fall one remark, yet more to the purpose ; namely, that his income being at that time fully adequate to his wants, he did not care to trouble himself about making more. And no doubt Sir Edward had sense enough to see that he could not possibly have a more unpromising position to attack ; for, speculations of all kinds, like that of the gaming-table in particular, are not uncommonly the resource of men who cannot make both ends meet ;—so, Sir Edward felt he must bide his time, till debts and difficulties should make Tom better disposed to lend a ready ear to some short cut in the long and hilly road to riches.

## CHAPTER IV.

HE WITNESSES A FASHIONABLE EXPERIMENT FOR  
IMPROVING ON THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE :  
BUT IT DOES NOT WORK AS WELL AS WAS  
EXPECTED.

THE London season was now drawing to a close. Everybody was talking of going out of town, and everybody wanted ; and, therefore, no one found something cheap, snug, and convenient, not too far from London, and near a railway station ; or, as was then more generally available, to be reached by steamer.

All the young people were thinking of sailing, fishing-parties, pic-nics, and hay-fields ; and, not a few of the old people were thinking of something far less cheerful ; namely, of double rent, fatigue of moving, orthodox wives with the "thirty-nine articles," and all the worry of a new start in housekeeping ; with strange tradesmen, strange servants, and such poor comfort

as were very ill-exchanged for what they had left behind.

Besides, old people, having already seen a sample of everything in this world, have no curiosity and no romance;—with them, all is reality and fact. They have no love of enterprise, still less of roughing it; and year after year have felt that, after the first fortnight, having taken tea with the Parson, laughed at the Clerk, and perhaps made acquaintance with the Doctor, and looked hard and often at the pigs, and counted the donkeys on the beach or the geese on the common, it is very stupid being away from everything, and knowing nobody; and, were it not for the name of the thing, they would not be sorry to find themselves at home.

It was already agreed that, on the first of September, Sir E. Alex should join Tom at Kitley Farm, part of his family estate, and have the first of the partridges. But while Tom was very sanguine, and his friend not quite cool at the reports received from the country as to the number and strength of the coveys, Sir Edward happened to lose sight of his frequent visitor for two or three days together; and, going to om's chambers, he found him laid low by that most debilitating of all complaints, an attack of influenza, with symptoms of ague.

Of all helpless, pitiable objects, there is nothing more deplorable than a sick bachelor in London chambers. You can hire attendance, but not tenderness—labour, but not love.

As to nurses, even the best can ill replace the ever-watchful care of a mother, who, once more, would control you as an infant; or a sister, or a wife, who, so silently, yet so eloquently, convince you that times there are when man must own his weakness and incapacity, and woman reign supreme.

Still, among your own people who have known you from a child, you may find a nurse who takes a hearty interest, and who boasts perhaps of bringing Master Thomas into the world and seeing Miss Mary go out of it, and who, having thus followed the fortunes of the family from the cradle to the grave, is rather above abstracting your pillow to soften her seat, or of trying everything that is strengthening in the first place on herself.

But in London, what can you do? Your doctor names a "Sarah Gamp," or your servant adds some specious title to his friend the charwoman, in consideration of a treat out of this very advantageous bargain, and, of course, the slower your recovery the better for themselves.

To such a nice little arrangement Tom was

at that time a helpless victim: and, as Sir Edward entered the room, the first thing that sounded in his ears was a most noisy, tearing kind of cough, which cough proceeded not, as one would suppose, from the patient, but from the far more important gullet of the nurse. Other senses in Sir Edward were offended in a way which caused him to open the window; but hereupon the nurse began to cry out, and declare it was so bad for her cough she never could abide it.

This was what the Americans call "heaping it up a little too mountainous," and so far it was fortunate for Tom: for, Sir Edward having all the instincts of a gentleman, declared that no friend of his should be poisoned in this way; and as to the old crone, he did remember hearing of smothering patients with a bolster, and nothing was more likely, especially if she was paid by the job.

It probably occurred to Sir Edward also, that half his troubles with Bella came from her having no baby to nurse, and nothing to do; so, seeing a case of generosity made easy, he proposed to have Tom at once removed to his own spare bedroom in May Fair.

It is not much to say, that the fortnight ring which Tom lay ill were among the happiest hours for many a long day that had check-

ered with their intermitting light and cheerfulness the blighted existence of Bella Johnson. She tended him as only fond and devoted woman can tend a man, feeling herself most amply, most richly rewarded, in the looks of gratitude and dependence so legible even in the glazed, the dull and drooping eye; as also, not least, in the sympathetic interest he betrayed, and which tempted her at length to disburthen her sorrows and to sound every note in the scale of woe, as she made him acquainted with her sad and pitiful story.

It appeared that Bella was the daughter of the poorest of all men, a poor gentleman; for her father was an officer in the army, and her mother was the daughter of a ship-builder at Dover.

As to her education, her parents thought, like their neighbours, that being accomplished was the same thing as being educated. Mental resources were nothing, effect and display everything; and instead of being trained in some useful course of duty and the kind of economy necessary to make home happy, or even to keep a house over her head, she was taught, also like her neighbours, to venture all on the risk matrimonial, and to ignore everything belonging to that world of week-days and working-days, that could possibly remind any deluded young



man that rent and taxes, coals and candles, soap and soda, besides three meals a-day, are simple necessities which the most angelic creatures they can marry must either look after or go without.

Mrs. Johnson did the housekeeping and Bella did the visiting, which consisted probably in leaving her mother's card for her, and keeping pace with the calls, and thus preserving the existence of the Johnsons fresh and alive in the memories of the little world of Puddlefield.

As to the main employment of Miss Bella Johnson's life, just as some idle young men who live waiting for something under Government, so Bella lived waiting to be married. Till that great event had come off, no time began to count — till that was done, nothing was to be done — her dress and ornaments, parties, visitings and affectations, as well as subscriptions to assemblies, were all to this end, or so many prudential investments for this particular return.

Well, days passed on, unenjoyed and profitless. She lived not in the present but in the future. The whole of Bella's life was as tantalising and unsatisfactory as everybody's else ten minutes before dinner. Indeed, time seemed a mere impertinence and interruption, so long as that which she had always been taught alone

made time worth living for, was so cruelly slow in coming to pass.

However, time, enjoyed or not enjoyed, as it will go on, so it proceeded to lay first her mother and then her father in the grave. Then came the overwhelming announcement that not only his half-pay had ceased, but that a life insurance he had effected had been long since dropped ; and as to poor Bella,—

“ The world was all before ~~her~~ where to choose.”

Without useful habits, without knowledge or experience, what could she do? The place of nursery-governess was all she could attempt, and even there she soon found that temper, patience, endurance, and self-control when she was blamed, of course, as often for the faults of others as her own, were qualities not to be learnt by the spoilt child of luxury and ease. So, Bella soon received notice to leave, despairing alike of another situation, or of her power to endure its indignities if she found one.

Just then it was, that when Bella's heart was sinking within her, and when she had not heard one kind word spoken to her for many months, when she was still yearning for sympathy she could not find, and when a life of insult and destitution rose as one dark cloud on the horizon

of her destiny, in an evil hour she met, believed, and trusted, and "loved not wisely, but too well," Sir E. Alex. He knew the time of her leaving her situation; he promised her marriage; finding her nearly penniless, he provided her with apartments, thus adding the ties of heartfelt esteem and gratitude to love; then he kept artfully delaying the fulfilment of his engagement. After a while he accused her of want of confidence, and pretended to be offended, saying, why not trust to his honour? and talked of the rite of marriage as a mere form, to be gone through at any time; and then he so far compromised her as to take up his abode in part of the same lodgings he had engaged for her.

Bella's tears at this point broke the thread of her story. "How can I tell," she said, in an agony of emotion, "but that at any party he joins he may not meet some titled lady, and that any note I take in my hand may not contain the fatal news that another alliance is about to be formed, and then he may suddenly disappear from London, and I be thrown dishonoured on the world, an outcast and utterly forlorn!"

Tom Langley naturally became deeply interested in the history and the fortunes of poor Bella. A woman may scorn an erring sister if he will, neither can we desire that any lady's

feelings should be less pure or sensitive than they are; still, much do we suspect that no woman but one who has herself been so basely betrayed can believe or imagine that fashionable kind of honour which allows one, who would resent with a bullet the imputation of a lie from a man, to be guilty of the basest treachery to a poor defenceless girl!

And it is because we too well know they are "more sinned against than sinning," that men are more tender in their judgment; and so far do we sympathise in the manliness of Hector, of whom Helen says so touchingly in the *Iliad*, that in all the years of misery she had brought upon them, not one word of reproach had he allowed to be uttered against her.

No wonder, then, that Tom's feelings should be touched, and, to say the truth, his conscience too. Being not much better than the men of his day, and the men of his fashionable set, he remembered how often he had acquiesced in lax talk and lax principles as to "the way of the world" and "fair game:" and this was the first time he had realised the heart-broken struggles of the poor hunted hare, cowering unseen in her form to die, while her thoughtless pursuers perhaps, were passing eagerly on, bent only on another cruel chase.

Tom Langley, like many others, could do a thoughtless thing, but he could not do a heartless one. The "non-matrimonial theory" of Sir E. Alex he had now seen tried in all its hateful length and breadth, and he began, for the first time, to perceive the dilemma was this, —If a woman had no heart, he cared not for her; and if she had, this was the way to break it.

The bed of sickness, when the sufferer is sick unto death, is very erroneously supposed to be favourable to serious thoughts: for, oftentimes, the mind is clouded, a state of apathy has set in; and to live or die is become a matter of dull indifference.

But the bed of sickness, as it was with Tom Langley, is a very improving season. Thoughts so easily dismissed in health, like unwelcome visitors, just then will stay. Hope, romance, imagination, and all the delusive lights, which in tumultuous health and with buoyant spirits forbid us to see things as they are, now leave us to ourselves. It was pleasure, in the most attractive form that Tom had ever conceived, that at this improving season now stood before him, revealed in all its cruel heartlessness. Before this time he had always thought Sir E. Alex a most lucky fellow, as having feathered his nest most softly, and solved the problem of

domestic life, without parting from the light-hearted bachelor's liberty and ease. But now the painted sepulchre was seen within, Tom seemed like Ulysses on the shores of Sicily: he had not only been enchanted with the syren's song, but also he had been allowed to catch a glimpse of corruption festering in the background enough to break the alluring spell.

I am sorry to confess of Tom Langley that, in thought and wish, he had not long before been guilty of meditating a very similar arrangement, and that now he was not a little disappointed to see the cost at which alone he could effect it. He had no mother or sister to make him a *home*. Drinking and smoking, billiards, or wearing and wasting excitement of some kind, and that in the company of selfish and heartless men—this was night after night his only resource—otherwise, he must mope in chambers by himself. We can feel for Tom—because, we distinctly remember a lonely bachelor, who invited the old charwoman of the house to come up and darn her stocking in his room, to break the ominous ticking of the clock, and perhaps keep up the association of a world peopled with woman-kind.

No sooner was Tom convalescent than he told Sir Edward he was quite sick of London

life, and had serious thoughts of living in the country. Sir Edward was not pleased with this ; it looked rather as if his hospitality, and the trouble he had taken, were all thrown away. However, they parted to meet at the end of August. Tom was rather melancholy in leaving poor Bella, and thoughtfully asked Sir Edward to go with him to a jeweller's to choose for her a trinket, in acknowledgment of her care and attention.

At that time, if anybody had represented to Tom Langley that by some little sacrifice he could relieve Bella from her painful and dishonoured position, that he could forbid her any more too curiously to eye each scented note, and even to start at the postman's rap, and no longer to dread, in the frequent absence of one selfish being, that the time had come when they must part for ever, Tom was quite equal to the effort ; and, had any one said that he would ever see the day when in such a cause his hand and heart would no longer go together, he certainly would never have believed it.

When Tom told us Bella's story, we could not help moralising in the manner following :—

We once had a favourite canary, which, being used to the warmth of our breakfast-room, died after all its natural habits had been dis-

placed by having all its wants supplied, escaped by an open window, and flew away. It was pitiful to trace it from tree to tree, evidently lost and helpless, and such a contrast to the other happy songsters, which flitted about, and found their food in security and ease.—No doubt by cold or hunger, or pecked by the other birds, this victim of our fondness must soon have died.

The fate of our canary would painfully remind us of Bella Johnson, and of many of the thousands who in various grades, which are better imagined than described, are the victims of foolish fondness, or of a system of morbid refinement, and a youth of sentiment and romance.

First of all, by ease, and by a fanciful idle life, their nerves are tuned to that exquisite sensibility which must prove agony in the ruder blasts of a jarring and contentious world. Meanwhile, as marriage holds not only its natural prominence in the pictures of their youthful life, but since it is also made the chief end and object for which they tutor their fingers or their toes—the heart and mind and principles being of secondary importance—the result is a distempered imagination, or ideal and visionary pictures of a world that is not, and never will be.

There is a well-known classical proverb, that “whom the Deity marks out for ruin he begin



by making mad." In female ruin the enemy finds this madness ready made. He finds, at least, a mind feeble, fanciful, romantic, and unstrung—in short, an unsound mind. The tempter soon succeeds; the wonder is, a Sir E. Alex should ever fail. Society at once raises its loud and virtuous outcry. Of this we have no reason to complain. We only wish the cry were raised at the right time and at the really guilty party. Would that public opinion could speak as indignantly when domestic duties might serve as (what they are) nature's own kindly tonic to the nerves, and means to invigorate their characters. Would that parents would be warned against living for appearances, eaten up by their own servants, and without a penny to leave behind; when, with their own daughters properly employed, they might find the truest satisfaction and household comfort, and ensure to their families a home to shelter them from dangers and trials of a certain description, which the rude village girl is far better taught to suspect and to avoid.

"What! and would you have a Countess turn cook, or a Duchess a dairy-maid?"

We never said anything of the kind. Albeit, such ladies as can afford no good cook, will as little soil their pretty fingers with many useful operation in the kitchen, as with their

favourite pursuits in their conservatory. No, ladies of wealth and fortune, in the very distribution—for what else is spending but the distribution?—of that fortune, may find enough to do. The duties involved in the regulation and command of a large household are quite enough for those who duly discharge them. Certainly, ladies of every rank may learn wisdom from words uttered in a really kind and friendly spirit: but, it is in the ranks we would number as one and two below the highest, in which habits that ultimately swell the black stream of *social* misery unhappily prevail. Nay, we truly believe that, just as a poor wife often proves a prodigal one, so is there more lounging indolence, and very far more affectation and romance, in the daughters of the poor “Gentry,” than among the Ladies of the British Peerage.

## CHAPTER V.

AS ALL THE WORLD WAS GOING OUT OF TOWN,  
TOM LANGLEY GOES TOO—HE MEETS WITH A  
REMARKABLE ADVENTURE.

TOM, having now two months before him, was for awhile in doubt where to go. Since "rolling stones gather no moss," and the ice of formality, and of stupidity too, remains to be broken afresh amongst new scenes and new faces, and since Tom must decide on a place where he would have some one to speak to, he decided at length in throwing himself once more among his old friends who lived around Shrimpton, in the county of ——, and wrote at once to his former landlady to prepare to receive him.

The glad news flew from house to house as by a train of gunpowder, soon as the first spark had flashed from the excited eyes of Mrs. Quires. Tom Langley was known of old at Shrimpton. His coming or not coming al-

most determined the goodness or the dulness of the season ; and from the keepers of lodgings to the catchers of shrimps and drivers of donkeys—including bathing, and boatmen, and cadgers various—all eyed Mr. Langley as so many stone of perquisites as soon he entered the place.

But, independently of all profit, there seems a general conspiracy among woman-kind to spoil a young fellow like Tom. The more helpless he is, or the more helplessness he affects, the more the ladies will do for him. Susan will leave off in the middle of anything to sew on a button for Mr. Langley ; whereas her pouting lips would telegraph no little peevishness and ill-humour if the same request proceeded from a lady. Cook and landlady, too, will be quite satisfied, for the mere small change of gossip and gallantry, to run up-stairs, however suddenly he may call, to catch at one half a message and guess the other half, and so never fail to have all he desires ready for his use and service by the time he comes home.

There was little chance, therefore, that Tom, or any other independent young bachelor, should fail of attracting much notice and hospitality in a neighbourhood he knew as well as Shrimpton. But Dryden says,—

"None but the brave,  
None but the brave,  
None but the brave,  
Deserve the fair."

And whoever knows anything of the female heart is well aware, that when once a young man signalises himself by any dashing adventure, at the risk of his life, from that moment he may hope to distance all possible rivals in the race of love.

Just such an opportunity offered, and was gallantly embraced by Tom Langley, before he had been many days in Shrimpton. But to give Tom his full and fair meed of praise, we must let him come in exactly in his proper place in the following most extraordinary drama of *real* life.

One of the most picturesque retreats in England is the small town of Rockdale, about two miles west, and a pleasant walk or row from Shrimpton. The cliffs are almost as high as Dover, and deep ravines with a roaring stream, dashing and splashing from rock to rock, between banks beautifully wooded with oak, birch, and thick underwood, down to the very sea, all combine to give a distinctive beauty to this highly-favoured spot. As to the population, the greater part is of the swallow tribe, flocking there to enjoy the

summer suns, and leaving little more than a local regiment of bathing-women, shrimp-gatherers, donkey-drivers, and lodging-house-keepers, to exist through the winter on the honey they can hive in the sunshine of their fortunes.

If ever the stirring tale of any romantic adventure would drop as a positive blessing upon any place or any people, to ripple the stagnant surface of lounging idle life, it were in a kind of "Sleepy Hollow," like the vale of Rockhead, commonly called Rockdale. The visitors come solely to amuse themselves, and naturally find in course of time, that two or three months of bathing, boating, and pic-nic parties, and watching the arrivals and departures in the boat that intercepts the Westhill steamer, with nothing to whet the appetite or to emphasize the monotony of sultry summer days—that this proves, at last, the most insipid existence imaginable.

However, it was ordained on the month of July, about — years ago, that the following most remarkable occurrence should take place. Whether it is to be numbered among providential and miraculous interpositions, in order that every reader may the better decide for himself, we pledge ourselves to forego all poetical licence, and to give a truly untouched photograph, as regards the extraordinary points of the story.

A young gentleman about twenty years of age, long used to climb the hills and perilous rocks in the highlands of Scotland, left his lodgings, at about ten o'clock in the morning, and roamed heedlessly along the sands under the beach, till he had passed round the nose of the Foreland. He then began to ascend the higher ground, in order to return over Martenbury Hill, and after two or three hundred feet of difficult climbing he made good his footing in a beaten tract.

This tract he followed some distance, till it degenerated into a kind of sheep-walk, bearing away in an oblique direction, so as to break the steepness of the ascent.

Along this path he was walking, occupied with little else than his own thoughts, when all of a sudden the path gave way beneath his feet, and he found himself precipitated down a steep incline—sometimes on his face, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, and sometimes bounding as from one level to another, while a seeming cataract of red earth and stones, as if he were sharing the ruin of a landslip, came thundering and crashing after him.

All this time the poor fellow was struggling in vain to dig his nails into the earth, or to grasp the pointed stones that were embedded in this

mountain's side. Stone after stone only tore his hands; stone after stone only mocked his efforts, and giving way came rolling after him.

In this manner, one while he was slipping, and another while he was precipitated from one inclined plane to another, till at last he passed to an incline less steep, and there he contrived, to his great relief, to arrest his downward course and to effect a lodgment—with his face to the earth and one foot against each side of the contracting gorge or gulley, down which he proved to have fallen.

He now began to breathe again, to collect his thoughts, to consider where he was, and what to do: but so thrilling was the sense that his frightful and downward career was arrested, that he felt sanguine, as well as grateful, in this moment, as he supposed, of his providential and certain deliverance.

But gratitude, like contentment, is very often strongest in the honest hearts of those who, in the language of the world, have very little to be grateful for. Behold here a young man on the bare hill-side, flat on his face, and with nails in the ground, bruised and sore, cut and bleeding, and just about ten feet from the brink of a precipice—not even knowing that he was not nearer still—and not daring to move for fear of



endangering a frightful repetition in his perilous descent.

In this position he lay some time, feeling his position as well as he could, first with one foot, and then with the other; for he could not dare to use both feet at the same time. He was also looking out of the corners of his eyes, and found at last that the range of his vision was limited by red earth and sandstone—a sloping bank of each—both on the right hand and on the left.

However, the very difficulty of breathing while he lay upon his face, and the utter hopelessness of climbing up again till he had reconnoitred more widely by shifting his position; all this, after about a quarter of an hour, made him risk all, by turning partly on his side, and partly on his back. “The gentleman,” said a sailor, “was in a nook of the rock when I first caught sight of him, for all the world like a man in a pig-trough set up on end, sloping against a wall.” We should rather say, he must have looked like a stone figure in a cathedral wall, supposing only that the niche and the statue reclined at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Indeed, so nearly perpendicular was his position, that he was obliged to keep an arm

against each side of the nook that formed his rocky cell, and thus only could he feel safe.

But what kind of safety was this?—So far he felt hopeful, and almost confident, of finding some means of escape; but these hopes were doomed gradually to grow more faint, even to the verge of despair, when his mind began to open to the frightful—the desperate position in which he was placed.

Still he did not lose heart. First of all, remembering well the hair-breadth escapes of other days, while fighting with the screaming eagles, as he had been lowered to their nests by one frail rope down the wildest cliffs of Orkney; remembering, too, that time was when, wherever his hand could hold and foot could rest, he had nerve to trust himself, proudly defiant of the angry sea lashing in its fury the rocks some hundred fathoms down below—a young man of such daring, and used to such hardy feats of climbing, naturally thought that where he had slid down he could undoubtedly get up.

But what was his dismay when, looking some feet above him, he found something like half the head of a cask—it was this that, to the imagination of the sailor, formed one end of the supposed pig-trough—projecting, as an imprac

ticable barrier or wide cornice to his prison wall ! What he saw was a part of the strata of the rock over which he had passed along with the crumbling and loosened earth, pouring down like water over some flat and stony ledge ; and this projecting rock, he saw at a glance, most effectually would bar his return !

But if he could not get up, yet still he thought he might get down. Height and distance are deceiving, and it did not seem so far. This delusive hope buoyed up his spirits for a considerable time as long as the tide was in, more particularly as he thought that he had yet another chance of deliverance, because vessels were continually passing up and down the Channel. They, too, did not seem so far off ; and he shouted to one till it had glided away, seeming smaller in the distance ; and then he shouted to a second. "How provoking !" he thought : "just a little nearer, and all would have been well." And then a third and a fourth came by, for the same vain calls for succour.

All these hopes and all these efforts served, at all events, to pass away the time, and to keep hope alive in his breast ; and then he thought, since none came to help him, or were likely to come very soon, he must seriously think of

waiting no longer, but setting to work in good earnest to help himself. "Surely he could do something at a critical moment like this? Could he not tear his coat in pieces and lower himself?"—he had heard of such means—"surely he could do something!" though how to get his coat off, or, indeed, how to dispense with the pressure of his arms against the sides of his little prison-house, like those of a sweep against the sides of a chimney, he did not know.

But as to getting down, and as to the giddy height at which he clung, his mind was doomed gradually to open, as it had before with regard to climbing up, to an utterly desperate state of things.

The first thing that gave a turn to his still sanguine heart, was the thought that the stones looked very small now the tide had gone back; yet he knew for certain that there were many stones there as big as a waggon at the very least.

Next, a gull flew screaming by, and as it floated down, and down, and down, on its oary pinions, it did seem to him a very long time before it reached so low as to hover and then alight upon the waves.

Lastly, to crown all, a lump of stone dislodged, rolled barely two yards below his feet

and then fell, and disappeared. He listened for the sound, and many, many seconds had elapsed before, as by a faint report, it sent back the tale that that stone had dropped some fifty fathoms before it broke upon the beach beneath!

And now more and more painful grew his sense of his awful position. Rocks stopped him climbing up; three or four hundred feet—about the height of St. Paul's Cathedral—stopped his climbing down; and, what was worse, he must now be more careful than ever not to slip, because he had just discovered that he could not be very far from the very verge of one headlong and precipitous descent!

His only hope of safety he now perceived, beyond all possibility of doubt, rested on one point alone. To one point, consequently, all his efforts and all his energies in the struggle between life and death must be directed—namely, attracting the attention of some one of the many vessels which, as in a moving panorama, kept passing up and down the Channel.

But if he were really three hundred feet above the sea—small to the eye as the very sea-ull on the rock—how hard to catch the eye of any one sailing even close below! how hard also to shout, high as from the top of St. Paul's,

above all amidst the breaking of the waves, to any one even close beneath !

Again, could any vessel possibly come close ? What seaman ever nears a rocky point ? And if so, look at him in the bend of that little cove : he is not on the face of the projecting foreland, but just where the rocks receding form a little bay. How small the angle at which any eye can see him ! how quickly would any vessel pass beyond the opening of these two lofty cliffs, which seemingly stand like giant sentinels, one on his right hand and one on his left, as if to guard and ensure his inexorable doom !

However, as drowning men will catch at straws, so will the spark of hope within the breast burn to the last moment of certain and resourceless ruin. Mercifully is man made to hope even against hope, and to owe his safety sometimes to desperate and undying efforts, where men at calmer moments would hang down their idle hands.

The neckerchief is now pulled, or rather snatched off. All seemed against him : it is not a good colour, it is grey ; still that must serve. It is no easy matter to spare a hand to tug at the knot and get it off ; still, he just contrives, giving first a tug at the handkerchie and then nervously clutching at the rock, and

then again at the handkerchief, and then again at the rock, by alternate action, till at length he is armed with a signal, a flag of distress, which he waves and shakes at every vessel that comes in sight, as often as he has courage to quit his hold and find a hand to spare.

Many a vessel did he wave and shout to, full half a mile off: but never mind, it serves to divert him, and to keep hope alive; for else the hours, indeed, were long. It was eleven o'clock in the morning, as near as he could guess, when first he gained this rocky seat; and now it is nearly four in the afternoon. He is hoarse with shouting; cramped and weary with extending his arms, as if crucified, to the rock, to maintain his critical, ay, and the most lonesome and discouraging position that mortal man has ever yet conceived.

Nothing solacing is there on which to rest his eye. The houses of Shrimpton, or any human habitation, he cannot see. Even the opposite coast, or sight of land, other rocks shut off from his view. Nothing is before him but to look right down the open sea—save the wild birds, who mock him by their easy and triumphant flight—and distant vessels, on which to set his foot he would give all his worldly goods and honours.

Behold, here was enacted, on this rugged face of the Martenbury Cliffs, the nearest possible resemblance to the Prometheus of Æschylus, chained hand and foot to some rugged and storm-beaten cliff, unpitied and alone, far from the paths of men!

And now the afternoon was turning chilly, the weather was unsettled, and storms had swept over him. The sufferer was numbed with cold. His heart had well-nigh sunk within him; a little more, and his aching limbs had now relaxed, and then he must have sunk down, and fallen a mangled mass upon the crags below.

But just now, in the moment of his greatest need, he hears voices just below him; he looks and sees the corner of a sail; then the whole sheet; and then a schooner, with men upon the deck, has steered clear round the point, within a stone's throw of the beach.

Immediately he shouts, and desperately waves his sorry signal of distress. No time is to be lost. In a moment the projecting rock upon his left will place them past the angle of sight. He waves and shouts, and waves again. The men hear something, and look about; but, alas, it seems too late! the schooner is all but gone! when one of the sailors sees a hat lying upon the beach, and therefore looks about again



Still, the schooner is all but gone!—Gone? No, it is standing in; it has lost the wind. And the current carries it, till it has made a tack right into this little bay. Now is his time. He shouts and waves again. For a moment the vessel is almost motionless. The men are asking each other who can be shouting. Once more they look up; and now they see him.—Immediately, they throw about their arms, to imply that they have caught sight of him. His handkerchief he waves again, to show that he understands their signs; and now he is all hope of a rescue. What are the men doing with the halliards? They run a flag to the topmast. He understands it. This is a signal for a pilot. Then, more and more the sailors wave their arms, and jump about, and make expressive signs. And, at last, a clear, loud voice, greets his ear,—“A pilot is putting off! Hold on, and you’re safe.”

These were joyful words to revive and gladden a sinking heart. The schooner could not spare hands; still it tacked about the spot, the men keeping him clearly in sight. But refreshed and strengthened as he was by this beering hope, and all the shouting and sympathy of the men below, to whom his position seemed a miracle, the pilot gig had full three

miles to come. And did they hasten? Hasten! — Yes, thanks to Tom Langley, long known at Shrimpton as the most powerful oarsman. He happened to be standing on the quay. “Lend us a hand,” cried John Martin. “We are one hand short; and the Betsy (an opposition boat) never must pull three miles a-head of us.”

Tom stripped in rowing style in a moment; stipulated to give the stroke — double-quick time, the crew well knew — and away dashed the Betsy, with his boat, the Conqueror, racing after her. And little did the partisans of each dream of the life at stake, when they cheered and shouted from the shore, “Betsy goes a-head!” “No; Conqueror’s after her!” “Go it, Betsy!” “Pull away, Conqueror!” “Well pulled, Mr. Langley!” So the distance of three miles was run in about five-and-twenty minutes, the Conqueror leading the way.

“Well, what’s the matter, Captain?” said the man from the stern of the Conqueror.

“Look up aloft, Hodges. D’ye see that man up in the rock? No time is to be lost. Take this rope and land three of your crew, and let the rest row about to direct them, for fear they cannot find him, when they have made out a way to the place where he is.”

No sooner said than done. Tom and tw

of the men landed with the rope. And now it proves awful climbing. But for Tom Langley—whose heart was in the right place, and bursting with excitement—the ascent would at one time have been deemed hopeless! “I’d go alone,” said Tom; “but how can I carry a hundred weight of rope and pull up the poor fellow at the end of it, single-handed?”

It was then arranged that Tom should go first and help up the others by the rope, and this was done by these brave fellows at a fearful risk,—we know the place well, and could never venture in cold blood within yards of the worst of it—till at last, after much tedious signalling and directing by the men in the boats below, they reached the right spot; and then Tom Langley, creeping on his belly, leant over the gorge and cried out, “There he is, just down below!”

And now the men take time to breathe while Tom makes a bight in the end of the rope, and the other two prepared a place to fix their feet—for the danger was, that they might lose their balance and be all dragged down over the cliff together.

But here, at the very crisis of their success, the difficulty seemed to render all their pains and perils vain. The same ledge that barred

the young man's climbing up also caused the rope to hang—oh! how agonising the disappointment!—a little further out than he could reach!

A samphire gatherer has been known to spring and catch the rope in mid-air, with scores of fathoms beneath his feet; but Mr. Morley (such was his name) had no footing for the spring, and was far too exhausted "thus to set his life upon a cast." So, for a minute or two, there hung the rope, which Tom shook and made to oscillate with all his might; but still in vain. At last Tom grew out of all patience. "Something," he said, "must be done. The poor man will break his heart and die, and drop off outright, at this rate," said he.

"Then, what can you do?" was the question.

"Why, get down a little lower," said Tom, "and guide the rope by the side of that vexatious ledge of rock that now alone keeps it from him."

"It isn't possible," said one.

"It is certain death to think of such a thing," said the other.

"I'll do it at all risks," replied Tom; "only you stand my weight as I swing from this rock to the other. Come, stick your heels in, as he well back, and you can hold me."

The men looked quite alarmed at this. They doubted if they could stand the jerk and swing of the rope: but Tom was determined, and in a minute the bold deed was done! and then this fine fellow, swinging securely down to a lower level, guided the rope close to Mr. Morley's face.

"Thank you! God bless you all!" said he. "But I am afraid that all is in vain. I have not strength to hold on."

"What's to be done?" said one man.

"I know," said Tom. "I'll make a running noose, big enough to go over head and shoulders and draw tight under his arm."

And now, once more the rope was guided back to Mr. Morley; "and when," said the sailors below, "we saw the gentleman let go his hold with both arms at once to get his head and shoulders through the noose, we shuddered and shut our eyes, and hung down our heads in terror and alarm, for we expected nothing less than to see him come tumbling down and dashed to atoms on the beach below."

But the same superintending Providence that had supported him so many hours, ordained that the bravery of these honest fellows should not be unrewarded. They soon, by a long pull and a strong pull, and a pull altogether, had the inexpressible delight of seeing Mr. Morley crawl over

the edge of this gorge, when every hand sprang forth, as if intuitively, to greet him. "The feeling was never to be erased," said Tom. "It was quite overpowering, even to the hardy sailors, for the tears started from their rough and weather-beaten eyes."

A heap of stones and turf has since been raised as a landmark to memorialise the scene of this wonderful preservation, with which Tom Langley's name was long most honourably connected in the annals of Rockdale and all the country round Shrimpton.

## CHAPTER VI.

TOM IS NOW "THE GREAT CARD" OF SHRIMPTON ;  
AND A CERTAIN YOUNG LADY IS ACCUSED OF  
UNFAIR PLAY, WHICH SUGGESTS THE THEORY  
OF "FAST YOUNG LADIES."

FROM this time Tom was the hero of the season. The risk he had run was very great. It was known that he had gone first, without the rope to help him, at every critical point. So Tom was welcomed everywhere, and made to tell his story, and not seldom to row out ladies to see the perilous crag. Among all the families around he was soon a privileged person.

At the Heathfields' he might go and play cricket with the boys at twelve o'clock, and stay to luncheon.

At Wilney Hall he might shoot at the target on the lawn, and take the chance of the Miss Mer-  
t's seeing him, and being just on the point of  
s'oting too. Then, as he was strong and athletic,  
delighted in boating, there were the Craw-

leys, whose garden sloped down to the water, and the Miss Crawleys—"so very masculine," the Mertons said—knew how to row.

In Emma Crawley Tom particularly delighted; not that he had any serious ideas of her or she of him, for it was well known that Emma was engaged: but then, like other engaged young ladies, she could venture to treat a young man like a brother. She could put on all the affectation of not being affected at all, but perfectly natural, and so she could say anything she pleased, and thus most insidiously could she steal upon his sympathies, and give soft suggestions in a quiet way. Of course, Miss Emma was quite safe. Tom could not possibly suspect her. So she took full benefit of that interesting season, as if flirting went for nothing.

With a bachelor there is nothing so fatal as this kind of quiet advice—this little sisterly conversation of an engaged young lady, or of a young married woman of the more fascinating kind: nothing is so likely to make a man dissatisfied with his own restless and lonely lodgings. And Emma Crawley was the most cruel of her kind.

"Good night, Mr. Langley," she would say. "I suppose you let yourself in? No one sits up for you! no one to tell how amused you have been! Dear me, how sad!"



At another time she would say, "Does Mrs. Mobcap make breakfast for you? How can a gentleman make tea? How awkward he must feel! I should recommend you a canary, to hop about his cage, or a cat, or a spaniel—any living creature would be some kind of company."

Mrs. Merton was nearly as bad. "What, always on the wing, Mr. Langley? so restless!" she would say. "Really, we do so pity you! Well, pray come in at any time you please—you must be so lonely. It is quite a charity to take care of you."

One would almost suppose that these ladies had a retaining fee from all the spinsters in and around the neighbourhood of Shrimpton.

A man who, like Tom, had never lived with any sister, nor enjoyed the society of those lady friends which, save in a family circle, no bachelor can ever know, is wonderfully overpowered when, in this way, some captivating Miss Crawley, or some interesting Mrs. Merton, looks down with pity, as from the serene altitude of their happy state, and either melts him with their sympathy or lulls him with the composure which, they would feign suggest, belongs to their own Elysian lot alone.

Tom is not the first young man who was as transported to a state of fancied and selfish bliss—forgot all his old heresies of liberty

and leading-strings, and jumped at once to the very illogical conclusion that every symptom of a restless spirit—each craving void that's aching in the breast—because he felt it when single, must necessarily be cured when married.

When these and other ladies of the same dangerous school were thus breaking up the fallows of Tom's callous feelings, he was continually hearing of the erratic doings of one Miss Minnie Chester.

Miss Minnie Chester, though, as compared with other girls, she was in one sense "fast," is not to be mistaken for one of the modern school of "fast young ladies." Still, had this term been invented in those days, which it was not, Minnie's relatives and lady friends—for, she tried their rules to the point of cracking; their etiquette could just hold her, and that was all—doubtless would have been reckoned fast indeed.

But not so the gentlemen. As regards modesty, propriety, flirting, or forwardness, men have an instinctive perception by no means guided by any of Mrs. Chapone's rules. Of such admired publications Minnie once told her mamma, after a long morning at Mrs. Chapone's very virtuous letters of advice, that if a girl had no modesty, she thought such books might instruct her how to put on a little, which a

seemed to her to be no small part of the then fashionable code of ladies' laws.

"We all know, mamma," said Minnie, "that we do like to talk to gentlemen a great deal better than to talk to ladies: so, why should we be doomed to wear a sheepish look as if we did not? No one likes Mrs. Collin's parties, and a good reason why—I am sure her last was a perfect hen-roost."

"Fie! my dear child, you must not use such expressions."

"Well, I am sure it is a most expressive term—George called it so; and a good word, too. Besides this, when we go out to a ball it seems to me as if prudery were to pass for propriety: we are expected to stand like a statue; and if we only look amused when we are amused, and do not seem as prim and proper, when we have that merry Captain Flighty for a partner, as when suffering under the cruel infliction of that dull and dry Peter Elton, people are so ill-natured as to say that we are asking the gentlemen to ask us. Such a degrading suspicion, indeed! Why, it would never enter the mind of any woman who was not a flirt herself!"

To understand these remarks at the present  
1, we must explain that Miss Minnie Chester  
3 of a free impulsive soul, and that with quite

as much purity of thought, and propriety of conduct, she had about three times as much life and spirit, as well as buoyancy and happiness, as any of the young ladies all the country round.

And since all our admiration for ladies fair cannot blind us to the fact, that they will pay the gentlemen the compliment of expecting a full and fair share of their attentions, and since this equitable allowance few young ladies were very likely to enjoy whole and entire as long as Minnie Chester was in the room, the consequence was that the ladies of Shrimpton often inveighed against her, as one who had recourse to contraband means, rather than being bound by the customary laws of fair competition.

In saying of days more than twenty years since, that "a fast young lady" was an unknown term, we would only imply that there was no such term, because no such character. There was no such privilege in the female parliament, and no such "Toleration Act" yet had passed. In those days, ladies' laws were much more strict—a severity which, while it had its use, bore rather hard upon such warm-hearted creatures as Minnie Chester: for, you might as well imprison an eagle in the cage for a sparrow, as attempt to hedge about Minnie with the forms and statutes of an ordinary bread-and-butter miss.

But, how came these social laws to be now more lax, and whence the privilege of "fast young ladies?"

Hereon hangs a tale!

The answer, we trust, will appear more plainly in the course of this eventful history: suffice it for the present to suggest, that some little may be explained by the fact, that the excessive prudery and reserve of some thirty years since has reacted, as usual, in the other extreme—in excessive forwardness and excessive freedom of manner.

But we suspect there is yet a more cogent reason; namely, that all laws become rather lax when the strain and the competition are universally felt to be rather strong. For, with the increased expenses of a "genteel" establishment, and with the diminished sources of a "genteel" income—since lovers cannot live upon air—the prospect of marriage is daily becoming less, and with numbers the chance is almost desperate. And if so, it certainly follows, that though reserve and affected indifference might have been natural enough while the idea that the gentlemen were to sue or propose, and the ladies to choose or reject, was not yet a fiction—still, now that not one lady in three has a prospect of any more than a match of convenience, if not of much in-

convenience too, it is easy to understand that the fashion should alter with the fact—that female dignity should give way with the times, and that a little more freedom and forwardness should be the general result.

Indeed times are changed. Whereas we used to hear of matchmaking mothers, we hear also of matchmaking fathers now ; and, as to a marriage of pure affection, ladies cannot afford to be particular, where it is so difficult “to settle” at all.

We say this with sorrow, but we say it as a fact, that at present there are too many butterflies in proportion to the bees, and that extravagance has reached such a height, that young people are expected to begin life where their fathers and mothers left off ; though each “genteel” generation has less to inherit, and less that they can earn in a “genteel” way.

What must be the result ? We are not guilty of the cruelty of causing this dilemma, but simply of stating it, in order that the world may look well at the difficulty, and stare the present dead lock of society hard in the face.

—“Either bring up your daughters with habits to marry on less, and curtail all needle expenses to assist them, or take the consequence of their not marrying at all—”

What those consequences will be, when once they extend to the majority in society—and they are fast creeping on—it is not very difficult to foresee. One single sister out of four may perhaps exercise her tenderness and love on nephews and nieces, and may pass her life as we often see, conscious of dignity, benevolence, and power, as the family friend—her pence and prudence ever at command—with meal that never wastes, and a cruse of kindness that never fails, a mother to the motherless, ever first at the cradle and last at the grave. But very different will it be when the single form a large and increasing majority. When those dear creatures, born to bless and to be blessed, see withering roses and unanswered love each in the other's pallid cheeks and drooping eyes—will they not soon suspect that the social system is at fault? However strong their principles, their views of things insensibly will change, and then, though the dull and the unfeeling may acquiesce, the Minnie Chesters and the nobler specimens of true womanhood will very soon show the way to another state of things.

All such predictions are comparatively safe, because the fulfilment is already not difficult to perceive. Already we discern the serious change in the free, and forward, and almost meretricious

cious style, of a daily increasing number at the present day. You may excuse this as "fast ;" but, remember, it is a fact, and full of meaning.

Secondly, there is a recognition of things once ignored, and hardly a pretence in a Sir Edward Alex to conceal the existence of a Bella Johnson.

These two stages are passed already ; nay, one more stage is also reached—namely, disgraceful marriage, more and more common, as of young and old, and such other alliances—when cold is the heart and extinct the fire—as are a mere legal profanation of the ordinance. A profanation is this so awful that, emphatically and feelingly as we would warn our friends by the fate and fortune of Bella Johnson, we cannot bring ourselves to feel that so lax an alliance is much worse. Both are bad, indeed ; but, we confess that we contemplate with as little pain an alliance where there is love without law, as where there is the mere apology of law with a staring impossibility of love.

Now, these marriages of desperation and marriages of convenience, or simply "to settle," are on the increase, and so far the holy rite is yearly more and more profaned. We are unwilling to give currency to a hard word for certain fashionable—now too fashionable—bagain and sale ; suffice it to say, that "the mati



monial theory" is practically assailed in divers forms. The Bella Johnsons are of a higher grade, and not limited to the class of mere libertines, as of old; arrangements like that of Sir E. Alex are becoming common among steady men of business—quite an institution, as in France. Convents and sisterhoods are also more and more in demand for the virtuous; and earnestly do we pray that this may be the least objectionable form in which the gushing charities of the female heart seek vent in the hard struggle between the purest yearnings of nature on the one hand, and artificial restraints on the other.

But things were very different in Minnie Chester's day. To affect a virtue though you have it not, is old as human nature; but for ladies to affect a certain loose and jaunty style, strangely out of tone and harmony with all that modest grace and purest sensitiveness, without which even the greatest libertine finds the spell broken and the charm dispelled that would draw him unto womankind;—all this must be chronicled as since the date of about the Great Prohibition. Some will deem it a fiction, but it is a fact which we relate, when we record that the character of another Sir E. Alex becoming dispersed abroad, Minnie and her friends felt it

a shame to find themselves in the same company, and shrank with disgust from his presence.

Minnie Chester was, therefore, not a "fast young lady;" she was simply a noble-minded girl, full of health, and heart, and spirits; and happy are we to believe, that many who err only in recognising such a term as "fast," are simply like Minnie Chester. Perhaps, theirs also is only tumultuous energy struggling for a sphere; and yearning affection impatient for an object.—The genial current of Minnie's soul only wanted a fair channel and a right direction; and, for want of this, it took sometimes an erratic course.

So, poor Minnie, as everybody remarked, was always getting into scrapes, and always misrepresented, because always envied and never understood. What made it so much the worse for Minnie was, that the gentlemen would always take her part, and pique her lady friends by the constant excuses that they so pertinaciously would offer.

"I see what it is," said Mrs. Walden, one morning, when quite angry at the persevering and obstinate defence by which Tom Langlev kept parrying every cut and thrust which was made against Minnie; "you gentlemen are like the girl you are allowed to flirt with."

"Then," said Tom, with an emphasis, drawing himself up, "I should only like to see the man who, without feelings of the deepest respect, would dare to approach Miss Minnie Chester."

"So! so! Mr. Langley," replied the lady; "that is the way the zephyr blows, is it? I now—begin—to see—that I must be a little careful what I say about Miss Minnie Chester in Mr. Thomas Langley's presence."

Tom was emphatically, and, as far as with a lady he could betray it, he was also angrily and indignantly silent.

The news of Tom's preference was quickly spread; every little attention was now remembered all round Shrimpton. "But it could not be; they had been so little together in company; and when they were, Minnie was flirting,"—they would call everything she did flirting—"with anybody else in the room but Tom Langley."

Such were the expressions of Shrimpton incredulity to hide feelings of very general disappointment and dismay.

It was remembered, however, when once there was time to cool and to breathe again, that one of those singular occurrences, which mean nothing at the time, but mean anything if anybody likes to make them mean after-

wards, was accidentally done on purpose at the Shrimpton Economico-Picnico Archery Meeting; which county meeting will, we are sure, throw so much light on the manners, customs, and contrivances of the very cold head-above-water-system of the middle of the nineteenth century, that we must give up just a page or two to describe it.

The neighbourhood of Shrimpton was very "genteel," and the society very exclusive; and, since in that stage of civilisation everybody must be ornamental, and no one useful to society, it became necessary, at last, to devise something that should at once be both *recherché* and economical.

Now, no lady could be better fitted to be lady-patroness of a society for the relief of poor gentlefolk, and for the maintenance of decayed appearances, than Mrs. General Stretcham.

It was Mrs. Stretcham who, in her husband's lifetime, had a long discussion one morning — as said little Jane, while racing a hoop with Fanny Merton,—"as to whether we should have any champagne at our supper-party. It was not for the expense of the thing, you know, Fanny dear, because it was only to have been gooseberry-vine."  
like it was Mrs. Stretcham who asked

Woodley, the bookseller, for something very cheap, but very showy. "It must cost very little, but look as if it cost a great deal, because she meant it for a present."

There is something very appropriate in two words of the feminine gender—both mother-wit and mother-tongue. Mrs. Stretcham had full use of both. What could be a better "return" for the invitation she received than the use of her field for an archery meeting—with that picturesque barn, which had once been an ancient grange? Then she could easily throw the incidental expenses on a managing committee. Admiral Probyn would lend flags for nothing; and then Sir Malton Ward, with his many men and keepers, would lend rustic decorations for nothing but the mere amusement of doing it: and so, a very small subscription only would be wanted to pay for the Shrimpton Band to grace and enliven the whole party.

As to the refreshments, she had a capital contrivance; each family, on the pic-nic principle, must bring their own, to be put *pro bono* on the table together.

All this came to pass, and worked very well; the only thing was, that the managing committee found at last that the wine was very often either sour, mothery, or corked; and that

beyond the most charitable allowance for mishaps or accidents: so much so, that certain gentlemen, who were at first observed to be more fond of their neighbour's bottle than their own, found themselves paid back in their own coin, and the game of Poison-my-neighbour seemed all the fashion. However, this was easily managed. A law was passed—though it did look rather ugly upon the statute-book, and might suggest conclusions uncomplimentary, if made use of in any county history in years to come—that every gentleman's name should be labelled as a voucher for the respectability of his own bottle of wine. After this all went on swimmingly.

But Mrs. General Stretcham was a woman of business. She thought it the duty of every one to do all the good they could in this world. She thought, also, that no good was ever done till people were married.—Seeing that balls and boarding-schools, galopades and German, accomplishments and archery, would all be at a discount, and even crinoline would collapse and fine figures fall away, were it not for a certain hope and expectation, which it was always her pleasure to bring to pass—Mrs. Stretcham was never so happy as when an archery day ended in an engagement; and some one proposed the

a white board and gold letters, and the lady's bow hanging unstrung upon the rafters, should record each success at the Shrimpton meeting.

Such being the little world of Shrimpton, the significant occurrence to which we alluded was this: One day, Minnie Chester was captain of one pair of targets, and Tom was grouped with another, ten yards to the right; and though Minnie Chester was an excellent shot, one of her arrows actually went plump into the middle of Mr. Langley's target!

Minnie, of course, was taxed with this as wilful, and done with malice aforethought, when the day was over. But Minnie was quick, and never at a loss for a reply, and what with her was wit, her neighbours called boldness.

"So," said Minnie, "what if I did? Pray did you read what was on the arrow just above the letters of my own name?"

"We never thought of looking for such a thing."

"Then that only shows what slow creatures you are!—If you had but discovered the words 'Ask papa,' that would have been something worth talking about, wouldn't it?"

It is wonderful what an interest ladies feel in matrimony, and everything thereto belonging.

How they gaze at a wedding cake! How curiously they regard the wedding cards! How sure to stop to see the happy pair (whether in Tyburnia or Belgravia it is all the same) start, with the slipper after them, and that for the hundredth time!

It is otherwise with men. Man rarely meditates marriage. He is overcome of a sudden, or glides into it by accident; but in a woman it is instinctive, and all in all. She is never too young for the idea, and never too old. The child forecasts maternity with the doll: the old lady not only lives again in her grandchildren, but is never so happy as when her party or policy ends in a match.

Accordingly, Mrs. Stretcham was delighted, and exclaimed in an ecstasy of satisfaction, and with a very unorthodox dependence on her own good works, "Well, that makes six!"

Oh! how charming was Mrs. Stretcham's prospect for some months to come! She could drive over to Minnie's mother and talk and talk, and exult and exult, with congratulations to give, and warm thanks to receive, every morning in the week. Then, there was the settlement, or what Mrs. Stretcham called "the tying up the money," to discuss, the wedding breakfa



to arrange, and the *trousseau* to order; and after all to lay out in state till the jealousy of all Shrimpton was tantalized into fits.

But, however amusing to Mrs. Stretcham, who had then two months good before her in which to play with the captives as a cat with a mouse, Mrs. Walden, Mrs. Fothergill, and Mrs. Tiley, and others, thought it no fun at all, and the young ladies thought it no fun. Tom had been the great card of the season, and now all was blank.

Shrimpton had been famous for Oxford and Cambridge reading-parties, but this season there were none, and the Shrimptonians had allowed that one Tom Langley was better worth knowing than a dozen mere ask-papa boys, with one sober-looking tutor in spectacles, bound over in his fellowship-bond to remain as he was.

And now this great card had turned up. Minnie Chester had all the luck, and the rest of the season, like the rest of the pack, would go for nothing! indeed, it was a perfect farce to play on. Who cared about hitting a target, a mere thing of straw? As well fish in a bucket of water, or stand up to dance with all girls!

The remarks in which these feelings were vented were really curious; some of the ladies talked virtuously, and almost questioned the jus-

tice of the dispensation, since they had often persuaded themselves that "flirting never prospered."

This met with more chuckling than sympathy from the gentlemen, who said Tom Langley was a lucky fellow ; that a counterfeit Minnie Chester might, perhaps, be a flirt, but that Minnie was truly genuine, a fine, good-hearted girl, who could afford to dispense with a little of the customary reserve or disguise, having so little in her honest nature that required either a mask or a veil.

Mrs. Walden's disappointment found vent in another form. For her part, she really pitied Mr. Langley. To think how that poor girl had been brought up ! She knew nothing at all about housekeeping. Indeed, she did hear that, in her mother's absence, when the cook came for orders, she proposed to have for dinner a roast leg of beef, and on another occasion she proposed a calf's head and shoulders.

"That really is a fact," said Ellen Walden ; "and I can tell you something else : once, when her papa insisted on her keeping accounts, she used to spend the small silver and halfpence, because it was so puzzling to add up."

"Yes," said Mr. Atherington ; "but I believe all the ladies allow that Miss Chester

taste in millinery and beautiful needlework is valuable indeed!"

Never mind, my dear: as to matrimony in the nineteenth century, we often treat a young couple as they say that the Africans treat their children—throw them into the water first, and then let them splash about, in imminent danger of sinking, till they learn to strike out and swim of themselves.

And there were some very buoyant and swimming tendencies in Minnie—some very tumble-down-and-get-up-again qualities: never to own herself conquered was her maxim, and as to their gloomy vaticinations and P.H.—by which letters she symbolised both Philosophy and Phrump—perhaps, after all, it would be like her late adventures in France, where, with her wits for her grammar and dictionary, she contrived to make her way for herself.

## CHAPTER VII.

MISS CHARLOTTE MILD MAY NOW APPEARS ; AND,  
WHILE TOM IS QUITE IN THE CLOUDS, SOME-  
THING OCCURS TO BRING HIM DOWN TO  
EARTH.

MINNIE had one kind and sympathising friend of the genial and the generous sort, named Charlotte Mildmay, who would always lend a ready ear to her or any one. Charlotte was one of those dear creatures who, delighting to bask in the rays of another's happiness, seem ever ready to aid the flow of their gushing feelings, all the time so patient and so interested, as if "she would devour up their discourse."

We will not say how old Charlotte was : but, since all would call her Charlotte, and never let her graduate as Miss Mildmay, we must go as far as to say she was older in character than in years, though comparatively young ; yet she : sorted with those of an age at which single lad grow composed as to their own destiny, whi

they yet retain a lively interest in the flutterings and the fortunes of their younger sisters.

Minnie used to declare that Charlotte never could grow old, so she would never be a P. H. Charlotte would listen to a love-story as delighted as a school-girl, whereas she said that all the expression she could draw forth from "the stiff, staid, and steady of the same age and epoch—as Valpy's Chronology would call it—was a complimentary mourning of hopes and fears, like the croaking old woman in the *Bride of Lammermoor*."

"Yes, dear," said Charlotte, "it is very cruel to chide our sanguine hopes, and borrow bitters from the morrow to spoil the sweets of the day."

"You are a darling to talk so," said Minnie. "I do declare to you I have been quite angry—I have been made quite wretched this morning; when, if ever in a girl's life, she has a right to be happy; for there came in, first of all, Mrs. Wilney, and after her Mrs. Walden, and you would have thought there were ravens on the chimney-top; for they feared, and they hoped, and they croaked, as if they were to attend, not  
7 wedding, but my obsequies."

A tear glistened in Charlotte's eye. She saw the world. Minnie's was a thrice-told

tale: judging the hearts of others by her own, she had naturally flown away to her friends for sympathy and congratulation: but she had returned frozen by the cold and chilly breath of jealous and selfish natures.

True, they were very polite, and left none of the speeches appropriate to the occasion unsaid; only it was qualified by a "but," by a significant question, or an "only hope," that what they had heard of Mr. Langley's London life might not be true! And one said, "Don't make too sure, my dear; these are early days yet; and such affairs often go off—often come to nothing, after all."

"Often go off!" said Minnie; "I felt as if I should have sunk into the earth."

So, we might say of Charlotte in the lines of Canning—

"Drops of compassion trembled in her eyelids,"

as Charlotte had an affair that went off, too.

Sad, indeed, was Charlotte Mildmay's tale. She used to say that she was a widow, though never yet a wife. All Shrimpton remembered the handsome young couple, Charlotte Mildmay and the fine gallant officer—his complexion transparent, his colour so blushing, and his eyes so sparkling. There was manly beauty; but

soon proved the beauty of death. It was a sorry morning when, after a consultation of the doctors, she heard there was no hope, only a question of time; and so, by degrees, she realised the sad truth that he was doomed. Her devotion was untiring; she forgot herself in him. The more he failed and faded, the more her love increased; till at last he could leave the house no more. She would have married that she might nurse him; but this her friends forbade. At length, he went faster and faster; and one morning he was gone. Charlotte's heart was buried with him; she retired from the busy throng and enjoyed quiet pleasures, and was the friend of all, because the rival of none; and so, by degrees, one after another, all learnt to regard Charlotte Mildmay as so much heart's-ease—as the adviser, friend, and comforter in ordinary, born to make each pleasure greater and each sorrow less.

Minnie said she was one of those choice, heavenly spirits, so rare on earth; surely she must have been born and nursed up aloft, and slid down the rainbow one fine, soft, genial day. Once Minnie observed to her,—“Charlotte dear, a sure you are a little impostor—you have ded your wings to deceive us, and we have detained an angel unawares.”

All this time Minnie scarcely walked on earth—all was ideal, vision and romance. Had her lover been bathed in some fairy stream, and come forth decked in all the roseate hues of any champion in Arabian tale, he could not have differed more widely from the real Tom Langley, than did the picture which was formed of him in Minnie's glowing and flattering imagination.

Neither was Tom much wiser or more practical than his lady fair. All his world at this period was like one of Turner's pictures; all was Elysium—one scene of gorgeous beauty and delight, melting in liquid golden hues of many-coloured happiness. Happiness! ay, ecstasy: he knew for a while but one thrilling, throbbing sense of love, to all the world, and to Minnie in particular.

All this lasted two or three days; and since by that time there was danger lest the picture of his imagination should sink too deeply into the tablets of the mind for common sense to rub it out again, he happily received a very precise and particular invitation to a kind of committee on ways and means, to be held at one o'clock on the day following, in the library of Mr. and Mrs. Chester.

Even as the pheasant soaring on the mi



of its golden pinions drops one feathered mass, heavy as lead, arrested by the fatal shot, just so did the three-cornered note arrest Tom Langley in his unearthly flight, and bring him de-mesmerised down to the world of solid, staring fact, to the real week-day and working-day, no-nonsense state of things.

Tom was staggered. He would have volunteered—that is, if he had thought of it, or if he had seen the worldly-wise use and purport of it—anything in this mortal world to please his—yes, his own—very own dear Minnie; but to be asked for it was another thing: it took away all the grace of generosity, and all the charm of love.

And could Minnie be privy to such huckster's ways?—could his loving, disinterested Minnie, belong to those sordid London-season misses, who look first for the diamonds in the richest suit of Hearts?

Oh! no, it could not be—impossible!

Then Tom began to cool. Well, this is only a talk about a settlement after all, he thought; though what a settlement exactly meant, the little law he had read did not tell him, and he knew no more than others of his age. “Why could a settlement?” he might have asked, and also might have read from his own heart

the apt reply we once heard offered,—Because it is the most complete settler the lover ever knows.

Tom had construed in his Latin Grammar “Love is a matter full of anxious fear;” but he never knew what that meant till now. Next day Tom must go according to appointment, but sadly against the grain, and sorely out of humour. He had not been used to be advised or questioned, still less to be dictated to, or required to do things, by any one. His will and pleasure had always reigned free without control; and so also did Robinson Crusoe’s, while moping with his cat and his parrots on the desolate island; but the moment he had the blessing of a little company, then he had to compound with the will and ways of other human beings.

But, never taught to think of this, Tom turned sullen and moody, and passed some hours with his back up, carrying about with him, as it were, a ready-made grievance in case one should be wanted. In short, he was just in that mood in which a man will misunderstand and quarrel with any one.

What made things worse was, that he received in the course of that evening and the following morning some very unpleasant co-

communications, which admitted of being interpreted in more senses than one.

The one interpretation was that other mammas, and perhaps other young ladies as well as Minnie, desired to have an interest in Langley Hall.

The other interpretation was only to be reconciled with downright spite and malice towards the lady of his love.

The disturbing cause of all his charming serenity and peace was this:—

On his table one day he found a note, evidently in a female hand much disguised, containing a visiting card, with the name scratched carefully out, and inscribed as follows:—

“BEWARE! BEWARE! YOU ARE DUPED!”

He also received two anonymous letters by the post, one of which represented to him in very dark colours the cupidity of the Chesters, with sundry insinuations which he did not for some time after very clearly understand.

The other contained a drawing of a mouse going into a trap, and some vile joke about its being baited with real *Chester* cheese.

Tom now felt some strangely conflicting feelings rise within him. “Such libellous rubbish should be treated with contempt.” True, but it is hard so utterly to despise what

you cannot possibly forget. He might burn the letters, but the impression yet remained. The appointment made for that day seemed very ominous, and threw a most pale and sickly light on the whole affair.

And then, his pride was severely wounded. The idea of his being duped, indeed ! Not even to have the credit of a free agent, but being coolly supposed to be just then sliding in a groove, mendaciously, ay, insultingly adjusted to the precise nature of his will and affections !

This made him feel quite out of humour with himself and all about him ; and these letters, like all such vile and wicked compositions, sowed his path, most cruelly, with the poisoned seeds of suspicion and mistrust of every one he met. At last, however, he determined that such villany never should succeed, and resolved that Minnie was more than ever entitled to his love and protection ; though, no doubt, he found it very hard to love any one during all this irritation and tumult of his feelings.

## CHAPTER VIII.

TOM SUSPECTS A DEEP FEMALE STRATAGEM, BUT IS TALKED BACK INTO HIS USUAL EQUANIMITY, DOING EXACTLY WHAT HE IS TOLD, WITH A FULL IMPRESSION OF HAVING ALL HIS OWN WAY.

WE all have experienced that, however good our intentions, however stern our resolution, there is a certain state of feeling and of sentiment which is altogether beyond our control, and that we can no more reason ourselves into love than we can reason any one else out of that most capricious and most tender passion.

Tom Langley felt all this on the occasion we are describing. Just now his Minnie was not half as beautiful or half as charming as before these cruel missiles smote him to the heart.

That, then, was his surprise when, on going to the Chesters to keep this highly-unpleasant appointment, as he entered the hall he espied the

smallest bit of Minnie's dress, with a hasty slam of a side-door, whisk swiftly out of sight, as if just in time to avoid him!

What, now, was he to imagine? This did, indeed, look like a deeply-laid and a coldly-concerted scheme. Was he really like a mouse running into a trap?—was he really to be handed over to the tender mercies of these grasping old people? Was he positively the dupe, of which he had been so unceremoniously warned in these letters? and did Minnie all the while connive, and, till the hard bargain was struck, seem to think it good worldly-wise policy to keep out of the way and positively to avoid him?

When once a man's suspicion or jealousy is roused, there never will be wanting sundry incidents to make things worse, or gentle side-winds to fan the flame. So, even the servant's awkward greeting bore a most sinister meaning.

"Please, sir, when you came you were to be shown in here," said the man, leading the way—and it was the first time he had done so—directly to the library.

"*Were* to be shown in!" "*Were* to be shown in, indeed!" thought the more and more tounded lover. "Then the whole household evidently alive to it! A literal trap!"

Yes, all seemed to whisper something very like the words in the nursery rhyme,

“Goosey, goosey gander, come and be killed.”

Tom had plenty of time for these reflections, as he was left some few minutes to his own meditations and in a high state of effervescence before any one came.

Supposing the roof had been taken off the house just at that moment, a bird's-eye view would have disclosed a scene very amusing and instructive to behold.

For, while Tom was thus simmering in one room, Minnie was almost boiling in another. The cold and callous way in which her mother had talked of a “pretty good settlement,” of “tying him down tight,” and the like, had so filled Minnie with terror and disgust, that she naturally remarked,—

“What man with the spirit of a gentleman would not be off like a bird? How degrading to seem to have thought of his money! as if a girl's best affections were to be bought and sold with all the heartless higgling as for house and land!”

It was after some such remonstrance as this, it, in the torrent of her feelings and the whirlwind of her energies, Minnie had rushed away

to her room, not having time to recover herself or to meet him with composure, when Tom knocked at the door.

One peculiarity of Tom Langley's temperament was, that, when he happened to be displeased, his ill-humour took the silent and the sullen form. Being also a nervous man, he had little power to conceal his feelings or to hide his emotions: so, this peculiar kind of silence would at times be carried almost to the extent of dumb-show; and on such occasions his manner would leave a most perplexing and quite a mysterious impression.

The consequence of this peculiarity in Tom Langley's character on the day in question, was that, when Mr. and Mrs. Chester came into the room—the lady evidently edging on the gentleman to a most unpleasant and distasteful duty—they soon found that they had all the talk to themselves; a thing at such times particularly disagreeable, because they were obliged to round off every sentence; and, unassisted by any nod or bow of intelligence, or any word of assent, to put all their prudential meaning into the plainest terms.

They talked—at least the lady did—sometimes in a serious, sometimes in a smiling way. For, a little pleasantry is often very useful



pass off unpalatable propositions; so, such old saws as "love and bread and cheese," resulting in no love, and no cheese to the bread—"love in a cottage" not being so romantic when people could not pay the rent—"poverty coming in at the door, and love flying out of the window"—some such good-humoured hints as these, interchanged with "things always expected"—"things customary"—"what gentlemen were always so proud of the honour of doing," and the like—all these various arts and figures of rhetoric found little encouragement, inasmuch as they all failed to elicit from the intended son-in-law anything more than a remark that "this was matter for consideration;" "for serious business must not be done in a hurry;" and at last, to put an end to the most unpleasant consultation he had ever held in his life, Tom caught at the mention of Mr. Chester's solicitor, and said that he could say nothing till he had seen Mr. Audrey.

Mr. and Mrs. Chester looked rather dark at each other when Tom was gone.

"I wanted some proposal to nail him, without the meddling of any solicitor whatever," said the lady. "Now I know what will happen; that keen lawyer, Audrey, will put him up

to this ;—to ask us to settle something, too! and then—how foolish we shall look!”

And now Minnie hastened in: and heard, with vexation and dismay, the very unsatisfactory result, which seemed positively to open the case anew, and to make her blissful engagement as uncertain as if it had yet to be made!

“ I told you so!” said Minnie, in despair. “ I knew you would get nothing out of him. So, now he is off! and you will never see him again. Oh, what shall I do? I shall be the talk of the whole place in an hour! and all those ill-natured creatures will be gratified!”

But after a pause she continued,—

“ Oh, that vexatious, meddling Mrs. Stretcham! I know she put you up to it, mamma. But—where is *he* gone?”

At this idea she rushed to the window; and, to complete her misery and distress, she actually saw Tom at full gallop down the coach-road—though usually thought too steep for anything but a trot—and thus proving the tumult of his feelings by the break-neck desperation of his pace.

Poor Minnie! Tom had positively been to the house, and had left the house, without word or a message to her!

Minnie stood like marble at the window. She never turned her face from the glass, or uttered a word, for some minutes: so said her mother to Mrs. Stretcham, who very soon came to hear the result of the meeting, very sanguine of having a handsome settlement to boast of, as the fruits of her own manœuvring and of the Shrimpton archery-meeting, all the country round.

At length Minnie threw up the sash, and sallied forth to find escape for herself and vent for her feelings in the garden and shrubbery—her surging emotions heaving like billows in her breast. Indeed, just at that moment a stranger collection of unruly spirits could hardly have been found anywhere, struggling and bubbling in so small a compass. Anger, irritation, and disgust at the policy of Mrs. Stretcham—indignation at Tom for the supposed slight and cool cut he had given her—the aching void and hopeless blank of foiled affection—and then, to crown all, the jeers and triumphs of the jealous world of Shrimpton, with the rival eyes of the next archery-meeting transfixing a certain disappointed young lady as her target—all this was curdling in her heart and whirling in her brain.

Poor, dear girl! Women in their way are

brave as men ; and, of the two, we suspect that the ladies can even less endure to be vanquished.

Not the blot of bankruptcy to the merchant, not the stain of cowardice to the soldier, makes the world of conscious men and women harder to walk forth into, with a look and appearance as if nothing at all had happened, than does that cruel thing called "a disappointment" to a once envied, congratulated, and triumphant young lady.

No doubt, Minnie paced and paced about the walks and shrubberies, and the breezes felt cooling to her burning cheek ; so instinctive is this in agitated moments, that we verily believe that, if a lady mummy were unrolled, and betrayed into a confession of this sentimental kind, she would tell us that, whenever her *mamma* jeopardised her beaux in her eagerness for a settlement, she used constantly to do the same. At all events one Mr. Achilles, about the date of mummies, is vividly described by Homer as sallying forth, to pace away the tumult of his feelings within sound of the foaming sea.

But Minnie's troubles soon proved too much for one, and she soon glided softly past Mr. Stretcham's carriage, which standing at the door—stole her bonnet and parasol from the

hat stand, and slipped away unobserved, by the short cut across the fields, to that well-known purveyor of heart's-ease, Charlotte Mildmay.

The reader can imagine the surprise and the pain with which the good-natured little fairy — for, Charlotte was beautiful and ethereal in form, with the beams of loving-kindness ever glancing from her eye — lent a ready ear to the woe and the wishes of the disconsolate Minnie.

Minnie was soon in the middle of her story; and Charlotte was eagerly listening, and mentally dotting down some shrewd reflections as she went along.

At last Charlotte said, "This seems to me all very strange, Minnie. There must be something to account for this; for I know he loves you, Minnie."

"Does he?" said Minnie, with a start. "How do you know, my dearest Charlotte?"

"First, because I can see he does; and secondly, because he told me so;" replied the friend, with the most quiet composure possible.

"Well, Charlotte, you are a dear!" said Minnie, brightening up. "He told you so! Why, when—where—how—you knowing little thing? Really you are up to anything in this universal world, that you are. I know how it is:

papa said this very morning, that 'an old poacher makes the best gamekeeper.'"

"Then I must acknowledge, Minnie, that I have been in Mr. Langley's confidence all along; though I have not seen him during these last three days. Indeed, I knew that he intended to propose to you some days before you at all expected it."

"You remarkable little creature! What — when you saw me every day, and never said a word about it!"

"No, Minnie; I don't make matches for the amusement of it; and till I saw the natural result of the feelings of both parties, I could not feel sure of a happy alliance."

"Well, then, you are a perfect wonder, Charlotte. I know, beyond all doubt, that I could not have kept so nice a little secret all to myself if it had been your beau instead of mine."

"And now my opinion is," continued her friend, "that there has been some mischief-making. My reason for thinking so is, that not one of your friends — *friends!* — oh, dear! what a world! — really wishes you to marry him. I have been the round of all the houses and made my little observations."

"Why, what do they say?"

"Say? — oh! they say everything that is virtuous — everything suitable to the occasion — that is what they say: but, the manner and the tone in which they say it is the point; and all the time the voice sounds hollow: and as to the expression of their eyes — they do not know that I observe them — but they look unutterable things!"

"And is that your only reason for suspecting some wicked interference? Dear me! what could the horrid people find to say against me?"

"No, this is not my only reason; for I know your dear Tom's nature pretty well, Minnie: there is nothing tortuous or tricky in it. Leave him alone, and he will go straight to the end. Therefore, when I hear there is any check or any unwillingness, I say at once that some one has been operating on his jealousy or exciting his fears. However, you had better leave all this to me, Minnie. I feel sure," said the observing little lady, with conscious satisfaction, "that he will come to me before very long; — but, might he not have been annoyed at the over-eagerness of Mrs. Stretcham's policy, and galloped off as you describe in vexation and inquietude, and yet without the least desire to avoid you? I think this may explain the difficulty. What say you?"

This very sensible suggestion tended exceed-

ingly to restore Minnie's peace of mind ; and, with many thanks to her best of friends, she hastened back across the fields, fearing her absence from home might have created alarm.

Minnie had not been gone a very long time before her lover felt that he must unburden, too ; and Charlotte was soon all attention to his version of the story. For some minutes she let him talk on ; then, after a while, she suddenly stopped him, and, in an instant, with a very searching look, she prepared him for this very searching question :—

“ Now, Mr. Langley, answer me this,— Has my dear young friend — too good for you, I declare she is ; and if you do not deserve to have her, I won't allow it, after all ; indeed, I won't !— has she, by word or deed, done anything to create a different impression ? ”

Tom was staggered. Little, indeed, was he prepared for such a lady-inquisitor, and he was just beginning to hesitate, thinking of the queer confession he should have to make, when Charlotte, who was quite merciless and inexorable, exclaimed,—

“ Not a moment will I allow ; answer me at once— honestly, and like yourself, Mr. Langley

Tom felt himself decidedly over-matched. Now the truth must come out ; and the end



the little lady's rigid investigation was, that the cards aforesaid, with the picture of the mouse going into the trap, and all, were extracted from his waistcoat-pocket, trying Charlotte's sense of the ridiculous very hard, no doubt ; and after she had sufficiently punished him in her own little sly and satirical way, Minnie was represented, to Tom's great joy, to be as much disgusted at the alleged mercenary part of the proceeding as he himself could be.

Whereupon Tom declared, with tears in his eyes, she was ten times as good as ever, at the least. There was nothing she did not deserve, and nothing too good for her ; only he always had been a great stickler against all kinds of abuses ; and the three-cornered summons and the awful interview in the study, coming, he might have said, on the top of the mouse-catching admonition — did look too much like the case of " a single man taken in and done for ;" — that he ever must maintain, however fallacious appearances had proved to be.

" And now," said Charlotte, " one word more, Mr. Langley. A settlement there must be—that is positive. In these days of speculation and fraud, ' riches take to themselves wings and fly away.' All that is proposed by prudent people is to tie those riches down—to

clip their wings, that is all. Only promise me this, and then I will allow you to go and see Minnie this evening, and to be happy as before. But remember, Miss Chester is a girl of spirit, and if there are any more quavers and crotchets, anything like being backward in coming forward, or indeed," she said, with a sly look, "any more of these little nervous apprehensions, it will then be my turn to interfere, and then Miss Minnie Chester is lost to you for ever. She is a hundred times too good for you," she continued, laughing. "So now go, and be a good boy to the end of the chapter."

After this piece of diplomacy had smoothed the ruffled feathers of both parties, all went on happily again, and all the train of horrors which had rushed into Minnie's mind—"for," she said, "it was so provoking, you know, Charlotte dear, to be dashed from the very pinnacle of happiness by such a meddling P. H. as Mrs. Stretcham"—had, before night, taken their dismal apparitions out again.

Was it not lucky? Tom had by this time received from London the case of trinkets ordered for Minnie's special choice; and Charlotte, the moment Tom was safe out of sight, listened over to Minnie, to say how she brought him to book—"only a little nervc

poor fellow, that was all;" and soon composed her troubled mind. Some little time after Charlotte had reached home again, Tom came galloping up in a state of happy excitement, and hung his horse to the gate, while he stepped in to show the casket he was carrying to his lady fair.

Charlotte looked at all this with mournful pleasure, smiling, though she "dropped some natural tears." She well remembered when the same moment of ecstasy—one thrill of tremulous delight, loving and being loved, was once her own: and then she changed her looks—all sympathy and compassion—to a lighter mood, and said, since he was really going to be a good boy she would let him off, and would not say anything about the timid little mouse, or any other naughtiness, any more; but, there were some lines she thought she could recollect—she had heard her brother quote them from a parody of Homer, she believed—rather appropriate to Mr. Thomas Langley's present errand. Charlotte Mildmay never forgot anything of the nature of fun and merriment when once she had heard it. The lines were these:—

"A red-nosed priest came hobbling after,  
With ransoms to redeem his daughter;  
And with him brought, to mend the quarrel,  
Of Yarmouth herrings half a barrel."

If ever two young people ought to be safe from prying eyes profane, surely it is in a moment like that which followed. The fact is, we do not exactly know how this loving couple that evening met, or how they parted; and, if we did, we strongly suspect that we should not think it quite fair to divulge.

## CHAPTER IX.

HOW, AFTER MANY EMPHATIC WARNINGS AND STERN RESOLUTIONS, TOM LANGLEY DOES THE VERY THING HE DETERMINED NOT TO DO.

AND now the time had come for Tom to absent himself from Fairyland, in order to meet two persons of very different characters. The one was Fred Audrey, to advise on the settlement; and the other was Sir Edward Alex, who, invited, as we have mentioned, for the shooting season, was about this time expected at Kitley Farm.

How little does any free-and-easy and pleasure-loving bachelor—exulting in his independence, living at the mercy of every wind of impulse or freak of humour—know what he virtually does promise and vow, and seriously venants to do, from the hour that he is married!

Thus reasoned Sir Edward Alex. He knew

all the time it was too late ; still, he had a cruel satisfaction in laying such unwelcome truths before Tom Langley.

“Now, just let us draw the comparison, Tom : First of all, you must cease to dine at a Club, and as often at a friend’s, with the best cook and the best wine that the land can produce. For, your wife can’t go to the Club, you know ; and you can only accept—in short, you will not very often be tempted to accept—any more invitations than you give in return. Hospitality proper is limited to single life ; the moment a man is married, the thing is regulated by the strictest principles of exchange : unless you happen to be a wit, a glee-singer, or a popular author, then you play the lion, and are allowed to go free !

“Next, there is the housekeeping ——”

“Oh ! but the lady does that,” replied Tom.

“What ? Laying in the stores ! Will the lady do that ? Keeping accounts, checking waste, dealing with mechanics, plumbers, sweeps, dustmen ; throwing snow off the roof, or putting tiles on ditto ; being paymaster-general, not only in house but out ; with tools, seeds, a l sundries for the garden ; hay, straw, oats, and even candles for the lantern in the stable—why,

my good fellow, you will be ruined if you don't attend to all this, and bored to death if you do ! ”

Here Tom cried, “ Enough ! ” He had made up his mind to take such things as they came.

“ Well, but,” continued his tormentor, “ you must be always on duty. A wife—in a lone, country-house especially—is a most cruel tie and drag on a man's time and locomotive tendencies. Keep her company as much as she requires, and you will die of the blues—walking two miles an hour, and waiting half an hour till she is ready.”

“ Well, but I need not do that.”

“ Need not do it ! Then you will have a nice time of it when you return from ‘ your own selfish pleasures, Mr. Langley ; ’ for so she will tell you : and you will spend the evening with short answers, sulky temper, and one as moped, nervous, and stupid as she can be.”

“ Come, you forget,” cried Tom ; “ a man need not always walk with his wife : he may ride, or he may drive.”

“ Ride and drive ! yes,—creepy crawly ! creepy crawly ! Bosh ! Why, past the days of flirtation upon horseback all this is very slow. Ah ! how different from your gallop across

country, or spanking along with a fine-stepping animal in the dog-cart!"

However, Tom became impatient, and cried "Enough!" to this strain, too: though he could not but see that he had not yet counted the full cost and sacrifice involved in the step he was about to take; still, like others, he was disposed "to chance it." And let us hope that he will find out for himself those compensations which are in store for the man who can live for others as well as for himself, and who goes the right way to the great truth, that no one loves himself so unwisely as the selfish man; and also that it is in another's sunshine that we find, as by reflection, the purest rays, as well as the most enduring happiness, that this life can afford.

After this very unpromising description of married life, given partly in jest and partly in earnest, Sir Edward set to work seriously to dissuade Tom from committing himself also to the extent of a settlement.

Tom had already promised, in a note written to Mr. Chester, a suitable settlement, to be determined by the advice of his solicitor, Mr. Audrey. This promise was well-timed; it proved a decisive answer to all the specious objections, and the solemn warnings, of Sir Edward. The effect of a settlement Sir Edward knew



well. Let Tom's property once be settled—let it once be placed in the power of certain trustees, to hold fast the capital, and not to let him spend one penny more than the interest; and then, from that time forth, in vain would it be for any one to explain his tempting speculations, and his many "certain fortunes," to Tom Langley. Sir Edward would, therefore, naturally feel that, even without any really fraudulent design, he should have for all his scrip, and all his shares in numerous golden schemes, one rich customer the less. He, therefore, very naturally went to work to stop this irrevocable bar to all his favourite plans and machinations for making Tom's fortune for him, quite after his own way and fancy.

"What!" said he, "will you ever consent to put yourself into leading-strings in this manner? Take my advice, and tell them No!—or rather, now I think of it, I'll tell you what you should say, as a very suitable and sensible answer:—make a handsome offer to settle all that they like to give their daughter; or if that won't do, say you offer to settle as much as they offer on their part; and—from what I should guess of their shaky credit—that will prove rather a safe answer for them, no doubt."

“Why! do you know,” he continued, “what a settlement positively means? You will be required to hand over your title-deeds, or to transfer all your stock into the names of three surly old fellows: they will receive all rents and all dividends, and expect you to be wonderfully civil, and wait their time and convenience every pay-day that comes round: and that, even although they should not happen to serve you like certain persons of our acquaintance, who flitted off on their way to America one fine morning, and forgot to observe the slight formality of leaving the money behind them. So much for the interest and the dividends of your estate. This is the way you are crippled and annoyed so far: but that is not the worst part of the story: for, as to touching a penny of your capital, whether it be for house or furniture, or to make the best of a scrape or peccadillo, or to stop a gap of any kind—why, man alive, the notion of such a thing would put me out of all patience! Suffice it to say that you are tied down hand and foot—literally bound over, having given bail for your good behaviour; and you can no longer say that one penny of your money is freely and comfortably your own!”

Tom was certainly alarmed at this view f

the case, and did not detect how highly and how artistically it was coloured ; but it was now too late to say No.

As to the idea of the wings of his liberty being clipped, or his independence fettered, still less his having to ask leave or licence of any one, he had always—like many other young men—taken it as granted, that he could go through life without the slightest possible necessity for anything of the kind.

However, Sir Edward prevailed so far, that, before Tom went according to appointment to see his solicitor, he determined not to settle a farthing more than he was actually obliged.

While Audrey was awaiting Tom's visit, aware of the settlement required, and no less aware of the easy and unsuspecting character of his client, which made a settlement an act of downright mercy to the gentleman and the lady both, he was having a little quiet conversation with his father, who, as we have already mentioned, had retired from business in favour of his son.

This old gentleman, Mr. Audrey, sen., had been either a player or a looker-on in the game of life for so many years, that he could boast of clear half-century of observation and experience.

Fifty years of experience is a very momentous presson ; it means fifty years of promises and

resolutions made and broken—fifty years of witnessing heaps raised by the father and crumbling with the son—of men of fortune humbled to the dust—of happy faces sorrow-sharpened—fifty years of “who would have thought it?”—and of first-rate speculations ending in headlong ruin. Then, fifty years show how bad seeds shoot up in divers forms—how natures once slightly crooked grow staringly awry—youthful follies proving hoary vices; while the illusion of self-interest and the crust of inveterate habits insensibly alter every feeling, searing the conscience, hardening the heart, and softening the brain, of those once believed to be good-hearted fellows and promising young men.

The old man had one favourite expression, which he thought far better than tons of solid argument, to say nothing of bladders of hope and sanguine expectations—which was simply this:—

“You know, Fred, I have so often seen it tried—and what always has been always will be.”

The occasion on which this wise and weighty saw came out was as he was discussing matters with his son, and forecasting the probable value of Tom’s property ten years after date, supposing they did not succeed in arranging to take a litt

better care of it than he was likely to do for himself.

"The question is," said the aged oracle, "What would you give for (say) 10,000*l.*, ten years after the date it has once been removed from its original safe investment? Remember," he said, counting on the tips of his fingers, "you must take several sources of possible—ay, and very probable diminution, into your calculation: for, first, some of the capital may be used as income—nothing more likely; or secondly, some may be lost in a mine or swamped in a ship speculation 'at one fell swoop;' or thirdly, which is the more tempting way of melting down a little capital, the whole may be turned into shares, with the seeds of consumption deeply seated in their very constitution, then handed over to your banker for security; and he is sure to want you to realize the very day that matters are at the worst."

"Well," said Fred Audrey, "at about how much would the tables of your long experience calculate the said 10,000*l.*?"

"Why, I should say, that with a young man of Langley's easy and inexperienced nature, one-half would be a very hazardous purchase: therefore, I say, that to tie up all your money for any young couple is the kindest thing

that you can do. For, if they would not touch capital, it does no harm; whereas, if they would, it certainly does a great deal of good. Besides this, I have many a time seen that, until young people get to the end of their tether, and have worried their trustees for indulgences in vain, they never learn prudence. After that point is gained, quite a change comes over them for the better; and, on the principle that 'a cat in a corner must fight,' they find out, for the first time, what they can do for themselves."

After this, the conversation turned upon another subject, which had a near connexion with the matter in hand—though they both agreed that their valued client must remain, perhaps, many a long day, quite in the dark. Lawyers are often necessarily cognisant of matters which honour forbids them to divulge.

"If we could only explain that piece of business to him," said Fred Audrey.

"But we can't. We must not dream of such a thing," replied the old man, timidly. "Besides, it might lead to disappointment; and if not, in my view of the case it would do him no good whatever."

And now Tom was ushered into the lawyer's office, and told all his story, the reasoning Sir Edward Alex included; at which name t

lawyer made a little memorandum on the tablets of his mind, but let Tom talk on.

No doubt the reader would expect to hear of cogent reasonings, and Sir Edward's fallacies ably exposed. But the lawyer knew that a knock-down argument, like a knock-down blow, has often quite as little to do towards putting a man in a better humour to receive the proposals of his adviser when he gets up again. So, as he plainly understood that a settlement of some kind had been promised, and must be made, he wisely determined, as to the question of more or less, to change the conversation, and to act on the policy of Sydney Smith, who said, — "If you want to convince a man, never reason with him; but ask him to dinner."

An invitation to discuss things a little more comfortably over a quiet dinner and a bottle of wine was therefore given, and accepted: at which dinner the two lawyers talked freely on several subjects, interspersing pleasing anecdotes of gentlemanlike fellows, who scorned to higgie where a lady's affections were in question, but made a handsome settlement — something for the lady to be proud of, and something positively to take the shine out of her rivals."

Tom liked this idea exceedingly; it made him quite happy; and happy a man always does

feel when full play is given to the more generous part of his nature. The result was, that after his original determination had suffered a little vinous solution, he agreed to settle the Kenterberry estate — valued at about ten thousand pounds — on the lady of his love.



## CHAPTER X.

HOW THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE BEGINS TO RUN  
A LITTLE SMOOTH.

TOM was not very eager to return to Sir Edward Alex, to make what he knew would appear to be a confession of his weakness, in consenting to make so handsome a settlement upon Minnie.

Weakness! Yes, weakness. In the penny-wise but heart-foolish language of this world, the good and generous seem always weak, and none so wise as those who would starve their noblest feelings in order to fill their purse.

However, to have this unpleasant meeting over, Tom returned the first thing the next morning to the farm, fully expecting to find his friend preparing his gun, filling his powder-horn, and impatient for his sport.

Far from being engaged in any sporting preparations, Sir Edward proved to be far too full of

his own affairs to think of Tom's. He was so immersed in business that he could hardly raise his head to speak to him, "writing," as he said, "against time," with a pile of letters, provincial newspapers, and prospectuses, lying scattered over the whole table before him.

"Strange work, indeed, for the first week in September!" said Tom, whose sanguine humour would allow him to do little else than cut pellets or pack up game in-doors, when he was not knocking down partridges without: only now times were altered, his Minnie forming a very strong diversion: which alone might have made an older man than Tom prepared to find that Sir Edward might possibly have a ruling passion of another kind: for, gambling in stock and shares, and preying on the unwary, commonly prove to be a more absorbing kind of sport than all the feathered bipeds that man can bring down to earth.

However, after allowing Sir Edward time to come as far as the sealing of his correspondence, Tom contrived to ease his mind by bursting out with a violent confession, that, "right or wrong," wise or foolish—the thing was done, and could not be undone: he had passed his word the night before so it was too late to argue about it—and that to the effect that he would

make a marriage-settlement, to the extent of the Kenterberry estate, on Miss Minnie Chester.

After thus magnanimously delivering himself, Tom waited to see how Sir Edward would receive this apparent slight, and bad compliment paid to his most urgent and emphatic advice.

But, Sir Edward was not a man to be taken by surprise—still less to waste one word or one thought upon things irrevocably past and done.

“The Kenterberry estate!” he replied; “but that is all, it appears: still, the consols you mentioned—some sixteen thousand of them, were they not?—it seems are yet untied; and this will leave you some little liberty of action, after all.—Well, not so bad, Tom. I thought, at least, that they would have aimed at the consols in the first instance, and perhaps had a shot at the estate afterwards.”

And now, Tom feeling all the happier for having this off his mind, they sallied forth to the covers.

In the course of the day Sir Edward said, to Tom’s great relief, that as the weather was sultry and he was by no means up to the mark—for, his hand was shaky, and repose was more grateful than exercise—a week at the partridges was enough at a time, and he would gladly join Tom and enjoy the sea-breezes of Shrimpton.

It was easy to see which way Tom's thoughts were flying. He was always writing letters to Minnie, or, as Sir Edward said, packing up hampers like a poulterer, and that every hour he passed within doors.

The news of Tom's return so early to Shrimpton spread very fast we may be sure. It also affected two ladies in a widely different way. The one was Minnie Chester, the other was Miss Charlotte Mildmay.

As to Minnie, she was delighted — "Mr. Langley's friend the Baronet," sounded charming, of course — neither was she too philosophical not to let that sound be heard more or less frequently, in proportion to the depreciating tendencies of the unsympathetic people who happened to be present.

But, it were a poor compliment to Minnie to imply that none of her lady friends could sympathise in her good fortune. We would only suggest that Shrimpton people were much like other people — they could not learn all in a day to prevent their impatience at their own untoward fortune from extending to the lucky winner of the lottery prize.

However, by this time Minnie's friends were pretty well reconciled — the young ladies more than their mammas, because the mammas

know by painful experience that well-to-do sons-in-law are not to be found every day; whereas, their daughters were more hopeful, their youthful minds taking impressions like sand. So the young ladies of the neighbourhood set about making Minnie as happy as they could. In short, Minnie and her approaching wedding seemed the accepted theme and the engrossing topic of the day, and no one found much sympathy or encouragement who ventured to speak against it.

"They are all coming round, dear," said Charlotte, as she stepped across the fields one joyous summer's morning. "I am no great believer in pure ill-nature; people often seem angry with others, when, in reality, they are only annoyed with their own ill-fortune, or with themselves."

But all this time Charlotte was particularly curious, nay, most anxious to see Tom's friend, Sir Edward Alex. She knew that Tom Langley was too ingenuous to suspect—easy to lead, though impossible to drive; and a word or two which he had casually dropped, as uttered by Sir Edward, jarred on Charlotte's noble and unselfish nature, and made her apprehend a sinister influence in that quarter.

And now Charlotte Mildmay and Sir Ed-

ward Alex have met, and have parted, and that, not without each having received a very strong and decided, though, at the same time, a widely different impression.

“Who is that Miss Mildmay?” asked Sir Edward, impatiently, the first moment he found himself alone with Tom Langley. “Have you known her all your life? No! Then, what has she to do with you or your affairs? And no relation to the Chesters either! There seems to be something remarkably strange, if not covertly satirical, about her; she is evidently cutting out the running for you, or ‘ruling your destiny,’ as the gipsies say, in your proposed prim, proper, and correct family-man establishment.”

The simple explanation of this was, that Charlotte Mildmay’s clear and searching eye had rested with its full, dark orb, encountering the feeble gaze and shifty expression of Sir Edward Alex.

Wonderful, indeed, in man or in woman, is the force of right, or truth, or moral power. The sovereign eye of man will hold at bay the crouching tiger. The eye of the experienced physician spell-binds the lunatic; and that true also of the heart and feelings which, say, is true of the mind deranged. Before 1

honest look of a pure and healthful nature the tricky, the sinister, and the designing, will quail and cower, owning a repulsive attraction, a negative power, a want of sympathy; in short, their own feelings and their own consciousness bear witness that there is a gulf between the evil and the good which they cannot pass.

But, there must be something radically wrong—there must be a confirmed moral pravity to feel in any respect uncomfortable in Miss Mildmay's presence. As to mere follies and human failings, no one could possibly be more indulgent than Charlotte. Had she only been appointed *Mother Confessor*, we are very much afraid the gentlemen would have been tempted to err, were it only for the pleasure of enjoying her sympathy and plenary indulgence.

Charlotte was surrounded always as with a halo of amability, and with so pure a moral atmosphere, that we breathed never so freely as in her presence. She had none of that awful and overpowering goodness which marks a torpidity of heart; nothing that savoured of the Finishing Academy; and nothing of the Mrs. Trimmer in her expression or her tone.

On the contrary, there was in Charlotte Mildmay a little dash of sauciness and satire, and a very spirited indignation at what was

wrong; just enough to supply that delightful acidity in the compound—that indispensable pungency of character, without which, even virtue seems insipid.

We are almost inclined to believe, that in the gold of human character a small percentage of alloy is necessary, were it only to stand the wear and tear of this rude life. What, though Charlotte's hopes and higher motives were of a world above, her heart and warmest interests still twined most healthily around dear objects here below.

And why not? "To the pure all things are pure." Their genial affinities attract and combine with the good and holy, wherever, in these degenerate days, that emanation, those sparks of the Eternal, even now survive unquenched and glimmering in our fallen nature.

Yes; it is the privilege of the good to discern, as Shakespeare says, "good in everything," "a soul of goodness in things evil," to invest the whole world with the glowing sunshine of their own warm hearts, and to walk in the light and cheerfulness of those rays which they cast before them at every turn in the path of life.

The nearer it drew to the day of the wedding, the more fondly, and as if with a mother



care, did Charlotte cling to Minnie; while as to Tom, so hearty was the interest she evinced in him, and so earnest, yet confiding, was her voice and manner, that he felt insensibly as beneath the spell of the charmer: so much so, that Minnie declared, were it not for Charlotte's well-known vow of celibacy, she should suspect a design to run away with her beau. Indeed Tom was always playfully threatening to give up Minnie, and marry Charlotte; and what lady, whether young or middle-aged, was ever quite indifferent to a compliment that acknowledged so forcibly the potency of her charms?

All this time there was a calm serenity and a subdued and sober light and cheerfulness — as of some chastened pleasure dashed with pain — which would brighten up that kind creature's endearing look; though sometimes a silent tear would find its way to glaze and bedim the lustre of her eye.

The truth was, that Charlotte was all this time in dreamland: her memory had fled away to the past; she was reviving the impressions of other days; while at the same time she trembled at the possible future of her interesting friend, knowing full well — as one who had been deeply sorrow-taught — the fleeting fortunes and the precarious tenure of all we hold most dear.

But there was on Charlotte's mind always one thing that she earnestly yearned to divulge; a secret that was a burden and an infliction too trying to endure: still, honour forbade; a great struggle was going on within her breast: but conscience prevailed, however cruel to hold in check the generous impulse and the feelings of so kind a heart.

She therefore felt obliged to content herself with hinting ominous hopes and anticipations of Minnie's future. She spoke of cheering suns below the dark horizon of her destiny; she exhorted to courage and constancy, and an abiding faith in One who would not suffer her to be tempted beyond her power to bear, but would eventually deliver her out of all her troubles.

Charlotte was also particularly emphatic when she spoke to Minnie about Tom's associates in his married life. She hoped that certain bachelor acquaintances would be quietly dropped; above all, she entreated Minnie to endeavour, by all sympathy and indulgence in the hour of trial, and even should he have to suffer the penalties of the most manifest imprudence—to preserve his implicit confidence, wisely urging that, though trials of all kinds must be constantly expected in this life, no wor

should ever let a husband's misfortunes come upon her unawares.

Both Tom and Minnie saw that there was something mysterious in Charlotte's expressions — something darkly hinted and feebly shadowed forth, as from the depths of a very feeling and a devoted heart : still, as the dream and its interpretation were never told, the recollection soon passed from their minds, and made little impression on their light and buoyant spirits.—“ She is a deep little thing, Tom, and there is no being up to her,” said Minnie ; and so they dismissed the subject from their thoughts.

It was after a very emphatic conversation of this kind, that Charlotte, one fine afternoon, trotted away on one of her little errands of mercy down Smugglers' Lane, a craggy and circuitous path among the rocks, which served as a road in dry weather, but a mere water-course after rain. It had been the scene of many a wild adventure in that lawless pursuit — quite the romance of the lower orders — in which, as in poaching, a spirit of defiance and the excitement of danger constitute no very small part of the attraction.

It may seem a failing, but so it was, that no wife ever narrated over her peat fire in a smoky hovel one of those stirring tales of kegs

run amidst the tumult of the elements, without Charlotte's animated look and sparkling eyes undeniably betraying that her sympathies were rather on the side of the bold transgressors than on that of her Majesty's excise, though no doubt she felt very naughty afterwards.

It might have been the same wicked hankering after forbidden fruit, as well as the romance and poetry of Charlotte Mildmay's nature, that led her also to sympathise with another race of freebooters, who, about every Michaelmas — the time of Shrimpton Fair — came year after year to pitch their tents, suspend their boiling kettles, and turn loose a very ragged set of horses, in the same sheltered lane.

It was interesting to behold her standing among these swarthy people, asking them of their welfare, and inquiring after their little ones by name; for gipsies in these days are not all heathens! and Charlotte had caused more than one to be baptized in the Shrimpton church, and had afterwards encouraged the parent to teach them to read the Prayer-book and Testament she had presented to them. It was in vain that the farmers cried out for the safety of their fowls and their fences; Charlotte was mighty even for the crabbed Farmer Podger, and in spite of his talk, she had her way. "M

Mildmay is such a wonderful overpowering lady," the old man declared, as he pleaded an excuse at the market-table for the greatest of all a farmer's weaknesses. Indeed Farmer Podger had no little to explain; for, in one instance, she actually threw open his gate to let her gipsy friends pitch a warmer tent on the leeward side of the hedge.

On the day in question, when Charlotte met her gipsy friends, the following conversation took place:—

*Charlotte.* "Well, Hester, so you have been fortune-telling again! Oh, fie! fie!"

*Hester.* "Oh, my lady, it's a bad thing to have no faith in your destiny; we know more my lady, a great deal, than you give us credit for."

*Charlotte.* "Know, Hester! Yes! but how do you know it? You know what people are silly enough to let you learn from one to serve as prophecy to another; and even I am fortune-teller enough to know as much as that."

*Hester.* "People would soon be tired of listening if the poor gipsy-woman didn't sometimes speak true."

*Charlotte.* "They would be soon tired, indeed, if all people were like me, Hester."

*Hester.* "Why that, my lady, you cannot say."

Pleasant hearing is what we are none of us too wise for. It would gladden your own ears, my lady — would it not? — to hear that your own dear gentleman——”

Here Charlotte started.

—— “ was only said to be gone, but would one day claim you for his bride.”

Well done, Gipsy Hester! This heart-thrust was worth a world of argument. For, are we all so very philosophical and wise, after all? Are there no fairy promises that invest our future with warm and glowing colours, even in these unromantic days? Yes, there is such a fairy as sanguine Hope; there is also such a thing as an abiding thought and yearning of the soul for its one and only genial object in an otherwise blank and blighted life. This it is that has power to conjure up ideal scenes—this will raise a fond illusion that the wisest of us all is slow to banish—this will seize on fancy’s “airy nothings,” and “turn them to shapes,” till we would almost quarrel with the cold and ruthless specimen of human-kind, who would draw back the curtain, let in the daylight, and disenchant us of all these happy dreams.

Charlotte, however, soon recovered; thou still she dropped tears, as she thought, unsee

but gipsies always see such things. Hester was well taught to set to plain and simple words these little incidents, as also the hollow tones with which Charlotte, with forced gaiety, continued this interesting little dialogue.

*Charlotte.* "Notwithstanding, Hester, I do, indeed, wonder, that people in these days are not too sensible for your fortune-telling earnings!"

*Hester.* "Why, for that matter, my lady, all the silly people are not all out of the world yet, by a pretty many, my lady."

What more passed we are not here concerned to say. Suffice it to observe, that Hester felt it altogether waste of ingenuity to endeavour even to keep up appearances before her lady-friend. She preferred setting to work to glean all she could from Charlotte's conversation about the "dear lady that was to be so happy," and "born with the gentleman, too, under such a lucky star;" and if, in the course of her remarks, Charlotte dropped any little expression of hopes or fears, or any the least qualification of a *but* or an *if*, it was, no doubt, treasured up as so much fortune-telling stock-in-trade by the subtle gipsy-woman, for her future use.

It happened by a strange coincidence, that very afternoon, that the same gipsy-woman was

seen to dodge the steps of Tom Langley, while walking on the sands with his affianced bride; and when they returned to tea they were laughing and amusing their friends with their interesting fortunes, bought at the small charge of a shilling a-piece.

"And what did Gipsy Hester tell you?" said Charlotte.

"Why, she said '*we were born to be happy, but with clouds between*': still, the garden of life was never so pleasant as when the sun burst out in the darkest of the storm.' "

"The sunbeams of mercy struggling with the darkness of the storm is an idea I have heard before," said Tom; "but there is something very poetical in the traditionary sayings of these untutored people."

This gipsy's oracle was repeated several times, and both Tom and Minnie seemed fond of dwelling on this little omen of the life before them; and Charlotte, in particular, seemed even more amused than any one. She persisted in hearing it repeated by both of them again and again, till, as she said, she was quite sure she remembered every word of this pretty prophecy from Gipsy Hester.



## CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE HAPPY PAIR ARE MARRIED, AND HOW  
MUCH LITTLE PEOPLE KNOW OF THE SECRETS  
OF THE GREAT.

It is related by travellers that certain African tribes could only distinguish past years by some striking event. One was the year of the famine, or the flood; and another was the year in which the white man passed.

In one respect this mode of reckoning is not peculiar to the Africans. We all have a practical chronology of the same kind. The mind flies from point to point, touching only on the rocks, that make shipwreck of our best affections—on the battle-fields of many a hard life-struggle, or, perhaps, it may be (and who is there but could look back to some such year?) “the year of my greatest sorrow”—the dark picture eieg here and there relieved by some few spots, at bright with sunny memories—all very such in the same way.

“ ‘ *There is nothing new under the sun,* ’ says the wise man. Life, in the same class and stage of society, is substantially the same in all. ‘ *The thing that hath been is the thing that shall be.* ’ Unfold but a little of the fabric, and every man of experience can carry on the pattern, sketch the outline, and guess the rest.

If this be so, we may reasonably attempt to convey a sufficiently full and correct impression of the fortunes of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Langley; not, indeed, by so glaring a fiction as pretending to have enacted the part of “the Invisible Gentleman,” ever at their side, but by dropping in upon them at the more critical periods of their very eventful married life, and relating rather the romantic or the interesting turns, than the monotonous stages and the dead level in their daily journey.

The wedding we need not describe. There was the usual difficulty about who should be asked to the church, and who to the breakfast; and if some of the neighbours, after all, must be left out, whose huff and wounded dignity they should be likely to hear least of afterwards.

For our own part we stood aloof, and looked on. We are not fond of weddings, or beginning the day with anything so truly falsetto as modern wedding. If it happen to be a brillia-

summer morning, the sun seems to mock the whole proceeding; while in winter, amidst howling winds and drifting snow, we have often trembled for the safety of the bride, in blonde and satin.

The raw recruit, with the ribbon in his hat, and the drum and fife sounding merrily in his ears, while his head is all the while swimming, and the whole scene is as a dream with the customary potations, cannot be supposed to form a very correct idea of the hard drill and discipline, and the very little of the romantic or of the heroic, in the life before him.

It is precisely the same with a young, interesting couple. Fashion, like the recruiting serjeant aforesaid, and our bridal customs, too, seem strangely out of tune with the part that often follows, and as unlike as possible to the after-marches of the hallucinated pair. "Make the most of it, my dear," said an experienced married lady, whose sun had long since passed the meridian, as a young bride was displaying her delicate moire and Brussels lace—"make the most of it, my dear; for there is very little after marriage at all like that."

No, these fairy folds, and robes like gossamer, have little enough to do with the working habiliments of striving and laborious life.

All this Charlotte Mildmay was wise enough to reflect, as she watched the carriages to the church, passing under a beautiful arch of evergreens, the pleasing memorial of rural sympathy, and then waited breathless at the window till the bells struck up; and that steeple-music, so rich in solemn associations, merrily proclaimed to the squire's hall and the farmer's homestead, to the fishermen on the beach and the gipsy families in Smugglers' Lane, the glad-some tidings that the long-wished-for hour at length had come; that no dire fatality had dashed their bliss; but the rich Mr. Langley had won the charming Miss Chester to be his bride.

Hark! do you hear the silver tones of those marriage bells, and can you read their mysterious language? What do they seem to say? Is it—

“Life is happy, life is happy,  
All is kindly, true for ever?”

Or is it—

“Cold and selfish hands are plighted,  
Hearts will never join, oh never!”

All depends on him who hears those marriage bells.

Merrily, merrily sound the marriage bell  
where two congenial souls have long yea

cheered and solaced each other along the steep and rugged road of life; but the same bells utter a leaden and funereal strain to him who rues a life of bitterness and discord.

And now the carriages have severally taken up their carefully-assorted couples at the church, Tom—the happiest moment of his life, though, like other happy moments, they slip by us at the time, and serve chiefly as pleasures of memory afterwards—committed the first proud act of the new but hopeful life before him when he led away Minnie from the vestry-room, and carried her off in his carriage, like an ancient knight with imprisoned maiden, and led the way back under the same arches of evergreens, through lanes of excited women, and tea-and-cake-expecting children—cheered by young farmers, who thought of putting banns up, and hailed with the heartfelt, but more silent blessing of older persons, who looked back, perchance, through a long mental vista, in which the morning sunshine and the lengthening shadows chequered alike the ancestral avenues of the rich and the stony lanes of the poor.

The more thoughtful might reflect how two outhful hearts were from this day attuned to deeper and more thrilling notes of joy and sorrow, and how—as after many another happy

wedding in their long lives—christenings and burials would gladden and would wring the young mother's heart; to say nothing of the possibility of altered fortune—of house and land gone and spent, and a stranger making merry in the hall of a broken-hearted and a ruined lord.

As to the last of these sombre reflections, they happened to be more than usually appropriate to that occasion.

Mrs. Stretcham's first remark to Charlotte—and that intensely euphasized with sundry telegraphic shrugs and self-important whispers the moment she had returned from the church—was this:

“Now, my dear Miss Mildmay, we have done it; all is quite safe now; and a good thing, too. For, being, you must understand, Mrs. Thomas Langley of Langley Hall, though she should happen to have to take in her old father and mother—and here, I must say that the words, ‘for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,’ I thought as I heard them, showed the beauty of our Liturgy, and the wisdom of our Church, more than any thing I ever thought of before—why, this is a great deal better than being obliged to go—out in the world—hush! dear—not a word. You understa—I know you do, you sly little woman; and,

doubt, that is what made you take so hearty an interest in this little affair. Was it not now, to say the truth?"

Charlotte was shocked at being thus supposed to sympathise in selfish and ungenerous feelings; still, she knew enough of the secrets of the neighbourhood not to feel the worldly wisdom of these remarks.

The wedding-breakfast was much like other wedding-breakfasts, save that everything expensive and everything out of season in the way of fruit, and every ingenious device of turning tongues into dragons with white-crested manes, and hams into swans, was carried to the full length of fashionable profusion. The history of this was, that Mrs. Robinson, who had lately retired on the profits of a large japan and lacquer-work manufactory at Birmingham, had tried to astonish all Shrimpton when her daughter Emily was married, and the said dragons and swans were intended as a hint that the Chesters, at least, were not astonished after all.

But that all this prosperity within doors was, in the language of the "decorators of balls and routes and evening parties," little better than "a and and gorgeous transparency," we may judge from the following conversation that went on about as the Chester coachman was handing

round a flagon to the other "pampered menials," who, all flowers and white favours, were lounging against the portico.

*First Coachman.* "Well, John, how are your people going on? Pretty comfortable?"

*The Chester Coachman.* "Why, I can't say that we are. It's no great things—so, if you hear of anything in my line in the course of the winter, please afford us a bit of a letter to let us know."

*Second Coachman.* "Why, William had a sight of the breakfast, and that did not look like cutting things close, at all events."

*Chester Coachman.* "Oh! that's no sign of anything at all. Gunter's people live a long way off, else they'd have been too good judges to have been done in this way. Our regular tradesmen weren't asked—a good reason why!"

*Third Coachman.* "Then you mean to say it isn't going to last?"

*Chester Coachman.* "My opinion is, that we deserve a pretty deal of credit for all this that we've been doing. We've kept up appearances, and married off our young lady just in time. But as to what I am telling you is a-brewing, this won't be directly, I dare say. I might get over this Christmas: but, if we we shan't carry on through the year. You thi



to ask, perhaps, how should I know : but I can tell when master opens letters and when it's bills—then I hear all the talk about it—a bit one time from master, and a bit another time from mistress, and then I put it all together. Why, if I go after a load of hay, the farmer grudges a glass for the order, and seems like saying, ' Thank ye for nothing at all ! ' ”

But Providence kindly hides the book of fate from those whose happiness was the first to be dashed by a glance at the unhappy page : so Tom and Minnie must not be supposed to be as yet affected by any of the coachman's sad predictions.

But soon these very coolly prognosticating and most observing characters are called on to take their seats on the box ; which no doubt they did, looking as respectful and proper as if all were solvent ; and all was quickly made stylish, ready, and in form to take up the happy couple, with their many admiring friends.

And now they are about to start. What though Minnie's composure is a little tried ? Ties there are which bind the youthful bride to her home, which she little thinks of till the time to sever them arrives. Invisible heart-strings fix us to the very rooms, and walls, and

walks. Long-familiar objects have become a part of our very being—as if instinct with a sense and sympathy for many an hour of hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows. The nursery of infancy, the little shelf of tattered story-books, the lonely chamber where so many a little tumult of the breast has been assuaged and calmed away; and where so many an ebb and flow of sanguine hope or nervous fear has broken rest—yes, here are memories to be torn up by the roots, even before the last embrace of father, mother, brothers, sisters; and always some village friend, whose humble history touches more chords still—all this our lady-friends will readily allow might render a tear not unbecoming, even in the high-spirited Minnie's eye.

And now they are off! Some little time and a mile or two of the briskest trot have set them fairly on their travels, and restored their equanimity. "Happy, happy, happy pair!" Yes, now we will admit they are happy—happy, indeed, as there are not many days in this life. Theirs is the grateful tumult of the thrilling heart—all creation joyous in the roseate hues of their warm and glowing imagination, mellow as in Claude—and with gold and silver shine, as in a fairy scene.—Joy ecstatic at

present, hope gleaming through the future—not a mote in its sunbeams, not a cloud in the deep blue firmament which spans their visionary state.

“Happy, happy, happy pair!” joy be with you ; make the most of each blissful hour. Be merry while you can ; wander together through Nature’s beauties ; feel the same emotions from the same giant rocks or the same fearful chasms, and be soothed alike by the same rippling streams, and cooled together in the leafy groves ; in these and other ways lay in a store of pleasing memories, on which to draw when there is need to conjure up the past to relieve the dark shadows of the passing hour.—Pleasure is pleasure now.—Be happy while the zest is keen, for days will come when pleasures cease to please, and when all the toys and the sports of life stand only for what they are, and when, as with the tottering grandfather in the fair, it is happiness enough to be free from pain, and all we can enjoy is rest !

## CHAPTER XII.

HOW THEY SETTLE DOWN LIKE PROPER MARRIED PEOPLE, AND STUDY THE HABITS OF THE NATIVES — THE PARSON'S WIFE SEEMS RATHER WORLDLY.

THERE is one commodity in particular, of which few interesting couples were ever yet allowed to begin the world without a very liberal supply; namely, good advice. Minnie's father could not even let Tom decide upon the way to pass his honeymoon, without putting in a word as to "what he could only say that he should do" under similar circumstances!

"The fact is, Langley," said he, "it is absurd to suppose that you and your wife can sit and look at each other for six weeks together; so I would advise you to fix on a place like Ramsgate, where there is a band playing, a Circulating Library, with, perhaps, a lottery wheel; or, in short, anything to do."

Of course, this elderly gentleman had o

lived, or perhaps he was born before the days of sentiment and romance. He was quite one of the utilitarian and the hardware school. To his imagination, the purling stream was all for wheels and waterworks; neither had the ocean any more sublimity than was comprised in sea-bathing, sands, and shrimps.

But Tom and Minnie were both lovers of nature. And it was one great pleasure that Tom had in reserve, to transport an enthusiastic and romantic young lady, almost for the first time, beyond the latitude and longitude of Shrimpton, and then to share her delight in the beauties of the Wye, calmly glancing between the frowning heights of Goodrich, and of Symond's Yat—passing on to the depths of Pont-y-monac, the Pass of Llanberris, and the giant heights of Snowdon.

In this pursuit of happiness in a wedding tour, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Langley simply followed a good old custom. But whence do such customs proceed? Can no one explain the philosophy of a "Sentimental Journey?" Is there no instinct, no natural yearning, that finds expression in these happy ways? Is there no

Deity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them  
; we will?"

Yes; the kindly and the genial Providence

that gladdens the ear with the soaring lark, or the liquid notes of the nightingale; that beguiles the journey of the poorest wanderer with the primrose, the violet, and the wild hedge-rose; that prompts the man of years to throw off for awhile his daily burthen, and join in the mirthful gambols of the child; the same ordains feast-days and holidays in the dry calendar of life—in the form of harvestings and merry-makings—in the form of birthdays and weddings—of house-warmings, and other ebullitions of a friendly spirit and an open heart.

And is it not the same Power that mercifully prompts two such sympathetic souls as Tom and Minnie—pledged now to jog together, not only down the gentle slopes, but through the stony passes and the ruts of life—to lay in what we regard as a little store of heart's-ease and of happiness at first starting, and that in some such joyous tour as we have described?

Meanwhile, preparations were making for their reception at Langley Hall—no less than a complete turn-out of every room, from the kitchen to the garret; and that, under better auspices than favour the enterprises of most young men.

It so happened that, as to this part of the arrangements, Tom had consulted with Cha

lotte Mildmay, who proceeded, slyly and satirically, to lead him through a little private examination in domestic economy and arrangements; at the end of which interesting consultation she archly told him, that in a lady's little ways he had everything to learn; and that, though his trusty agent, Mr. Frederic Audrey, was very properly described as an exceedingly good kind of fellow, still, as to Mrs. Frederic Audrey, on whose taste and ideas he was likely to depend, however much that taste might be in harmony with that of Mrs. Landsurveyor, her respected parent, it was not quite of the same fine edge and nice perception as that of Mrs. Thomas Langley.

No one could possibly imagine that Charlotte Mildmay meant that she would herself like to have, in this point also, a finger in the pie matrimonial; still, it did so happen that Charlotte and the Aunt, with whom she lived, had about that time decided on having a change of air and change of scene somewhere, and Tom was delighted at the very thought of the proposal that naturally occurred to the sanguine mind of Minnie — for, her thoughts ran on nothing but prospective plans and contrivances in those days of her ecstatic bliss — and gave Charlotte an invitation to take up her abode at

Langley Hall, with plenary powers to pull down and set up, to clear away, shift, change and renovate, just as she pleased. And we cannot doubt but many a young lady, who hears of so charming a sphere for a little taste and energy, will almost dream how she would enact the part of Charlotte Mildmay, if a similar occasion offered to do as she pleased.

Of course, the mistress *pro tem.* found one of those impracticable creatures called "an old servant," as the woman in possession; and Charlotte's fights with the said authority, especially in the matter of making one resolute sweep and clearance of all the metal ware that for years had ceased to shine below-stairs, and also to condemn many a time-honoured but dilapidated friend of the family up-stairs—all this, most vividly and graphically described in one of Charlotte's amusing letters, Tom and Minnie used joyfully to anticipate, as so much fun and merriment, at almost every post-town in their tour.

No house can become complete in nicety or elegance without the last touches of a lady's hand, and the delicate scrutiny of a lady's eye. After a few magic passes—the placing of a screen, the arrangement of a tidy or the folds of a curtain, the shifting of a sofa or the sub-



admitted light from a blind—a room which before was mere tables and chairs, and unmeaning upholstery, becomes at once instinct with life, and grace, and comfort, and all those indescribable charms that are implied in a refined and well-ordered home.

And all, we may be sure, was complete, even to the pins in the pincushion, and the bouquet on the toilet-table, ere Charlotte considered that she had duly prepared the bridal home, and had quitted it just in time to leave quiet and undisturbed possession, on the day that the bells were ringing for the happy pair to Langley Hall.

And, we envy the feelings of this happy pair. We envy Minnie her overpowering sense of all that a husband's love and female friendship could do for an auspicious outset in the journey of life. We envy Tom his satisfaction in realising for his bride her maiden vision of all the independence and the sovereignty of which all young ladies are so proud—comprised in the honours of a married woman.

Of course, in due time the neighbours come to call; but first Minnie had time to walk out and reconnoitre the place and the residences; and, perhaps, nothing tells much more of the history of a neighbour than a sight of his house

and grounds, roads, gates, equipage, and other appurtenances.

The village of Brendon had been for many years the aristocratic domain of about a dozen county families ; their genealogical trees being more or less developed, their estates more or less mortgaged and encumbered, and their patrimony more or less eaten up. The usual boast was, that they were generations removed from all kinds of trade. This may seem very strange as a point of honour and of self-glorification, but still it is one by no means peculiar to Brendon. The opinion widely prevails that, as regards the common weal, every well-bred man should drain as much, and do as little, in the course of an useless life, as he possibly can contrive to do.

The form of polity in Brendon was a kind of Squirearchy. Instead of the Baron and the Donjon's Keep, there was the Justice and the County Gaol ; the despotism being, though less in degree, yet the same in kind. They would sit in judgment on the poachers of their own game, and commit their own threshers to gaol for leaving corn in the straw ; and make any man a "rogue and vagrant" whose misdeeds <sup>their</sup> were puzzled to bring under any other law. I we must make allowance for the fact, that tl. lived nearer to the times when, as the histori

says, "the common sort were not much counted of, and sturdy knaves hung up apace."

Besides this, the majority did not mean to be bad fellows, but displayed no little heartiness and hospitality, and could value a friend by the capacity of his stomach and the strength of his head ; so, their little monarchy was tempered with mercy, and common sense qualified the severity of common law. For instance, Squire Fenton once compounded a felony with a good ashen stick, laid on in his presence in his own stableyard ; and old Justice Watford, being puzzled at not finding such a word as *gooseberries* in his law-books, though, he said, he could find *apples*—such was his reverence for the letter of the law—let a young thief go.

And was not the said despotism also limited by public opinion ? —Yes. But it was only the opinion of their own little neighbourhood. It was almost a breach of privilege in those days to question their sayings and doings in a county paper : their opinions, like their port wine, passed from father to son, and they as little feared that either would be the worse for keeping. A fusty green-baize pew in the parish church, and sometimes a damp and moth-eaten attachment in front of the singing-gallery, or tattered banners and old armour, savouring too

much of the gibbet and the scarecrow hanging from the roof—all this formed part of one or more of those establishments, of which some yet remained, though some had been replaced and passed away from the little world of Brendon.

Those were the days of "the good old servants," and, we are afraid, of the bad old masters. "The maidens" of the village were billeted upon the great houses; and where there is little possibility of choice, it is easy to boast of little change. In such a state of society there was a virtual combination of masters against servants, amounting, in a degree, to a kind of irresponsible domestic power. Whereas now, the necessity of exercising a little tact and temper, and promising a rise of wages with a rise of worth, on the one side; and the emulation of a free market for labour in a wider circle on the other side; all this certainly does appear to be, on the balance, a far more healthy and improving state of things.

But in those days, the spirit of serfdom prevailed. Education was deemed a levelling and a radical movement. Men believed that their servants, like their horses, would bolt and shy with too much light and too much head; and that both were more safely driven with blinkers and bearing-reins. To railroads, free trade, and

other improvements, they offered either an active or a passive resistance; and, in short, in this sphere of prejudice and privilege—in this close-county corporation—all was deadly-lively and averse to change. So much so, indeed, that every move in advance was regarded with jealousy and horror, and whatever was good for them had to be forced down the silly children's throats.

In all this they expected to be protected. Land covered with farm-buildings was everything; land covered with factories was nothing at all. As to "the landed interest," to their ears there was stability in every syllable of it, and substance in the very sound. To think of tampering with it, was like cutting the plank from under you; and they talked as if all England would tumble through into the sky, and as if none but a radical and revolutionary Government could possibly disturb such a rookery of olden time—the very props of the Constitution and the bulwarks of the State.

But Providence wills progress. The same law which says, Live by labour, says also in effect, If you don't you shall make way for those who do. Therefore, at the time of which we are eaking, Minnie saw, in the houses around, both a new school and the old. She heard that—

just as the House of Lords is preserved in healthy life and cordial sympathy with the common weal by a periodical infusion of new blood, and just as they are protected from revolutionary jealousy because the victorious general, the prudent statesman, and even the successful merchant or the wealthy capitalist, can all look upon the Peerage as a store of possible honours for themselves—even so is it well that the landed interest and the squirearchy should sometimes open their guarded doors to those who had been so plebeian as to deal in bales of cloth instead of packs of wool, in shiploads of cotton instead of cartloads of corn, and to busy their minds with manufactures instead of manures.

Tom was no philosopher; but, having all the feelings of a gentleman, he held that there was a degree of refinement and of taste, a sense of the elegancies and the poetry of life, rarely to be found out of his own order: and though, as regarded the Brunels, the Stephensons, and the Arkwrights, with these men the very vigour of their minds was a security against that pretence and affectation, without which men may be plain and humble, but can never be vulgar and repulsive. Still, as regarded the wives, if not daughters of rising men, there was common

nothing to counteract the disadvantages of early habits, and the influence of inferior associations.

We cannot blame Tom for forming this opinion. For, however much we may respect the successful merchant, risen from small beginnings, it is only the second generation that commonly can grace and adorn the fortune that industry has raised.

Remarks akin to these might have been suggested, as Tom was pointing out to Minnie a fine modern house, with spacious steps and portico, contrasting strangely with venerable yews and other trees, that showed at a glance that the house was new, but the site was old—plainly implying that the ancestral honours of some former proprietor had passed away.

But, before they had time for any explanations, the Rev. William Farren, the Rector of Brendon, a tall, lithe, and active-looking man, rather under fifty years of age, who was now approaching, with one hasty glance at Tom, as much as to say, "Then this is your charming wife, of whom I have heard!" had taken Minnie by the hand. For this worthy Rector Tom entertained a sincere regard. He had once been, for a short time, his pupil; and the Rector had either christened or buried no small part of the

Langley family. We must mention that the Rector was also one of the canons of Arminster.

"I am very much afraid," the Rector said, addressing Minnie, "that your husband has been amusing you with a very naughty story about that fine mansion?"

"No, no," replied Tom, laughing; "you are quite in time to tell that story yourself, Mr. Farren."

Here Minnie insisted that the story, which promised to be so good a one, should forthwith be related by one of the two gentlemen, at all events.

"Ah! well," said the Rector; "then, if you will have it, you must know, Mrs. Langley, that honest industry creates envy, as well as honour, in this part of the country. And since Mr. Holland, the proprietor of that princely abode, made a fortune as a spirit-merchant, the people are so satirical as to call that house 'Gottingen (*Got-in-Gin*) Palace!'"

"I suppose," said Minnie, highly entertained, "that the neighbours could ill bear the change from its former lord."

"There is some truth in that observation," was the reply; "but, really, there was not much to regret. We have gained greatly on balance. Every class has his day. Mr. Langley well remembers the old Elizabethan hou



for many years the seat of the Hardynges. It was bought and pulled down by Mr. Holland, to make way for that more modern, and far more commodious residence. Those good old families wear out—literally wear out—by time. The Hardynges were gone, past all recovery, long before this happened. Nothing was kept up, either in the house or in the estate. And saving some pale and faded portraits of interminable Hardynges, there was scarcely a bit of paint left in the old house. The stags on the gate-posts had lost, one its antler and the other its nose; and as to that pond, where you see those beautiful swans, it was so choked up that the two or three superannuated ducks grew giddy as they swam; and even the poor frogs could not enjoy themselves for want of elbow-room.

“Mr. Farren,” said Tom, turning with affected gravity to Minnie, “used to be a respectable Conservative; but I am afraid he is now growing rather satirical, and is quite radically disposed.”

“Conservative!” said the Rector; “indeed I am truly conservative—that is, as long as I can be so with a serious countenance. I stick to the ship while the planks hold together. But

how can any number of tottering families—neglecting the land, ruining the tradespeople, and starving the labourer where he ought to find work—make one sound constitution? ‘Some people,’ said a witty French writer, ‘had they lived at the time of the Creation, would have voted for *conserving* the good old chaos.’”

“And are these retired spirit-dealers visitable?” inquired Minnie, who knew little, indeed, of the merchant-princes of modern times. At that moment she had before her mind’s eye a vivid picture of her old acquaintance, Mr. Dubbins, “licensed to sell wine, spirits, and tobacco,” looking very awkward and strangely out of his element in an elegant drawing-room.

“This is the very subject on which I desired a little conversation,” added Tom. “You know, Mr. Farren, my dear mother made no new acquaintance during her last few years, and now I hear that a great change has taken place in the neighbourhood; and the question is, What are we to do?—whom are we to visit?—where are we to draw the line?”

“To lay down any rule is difficult, indeed,” replied his friend. “For, some Miss Double X, I remember, married a peer; and somebody ‘Entire’ is also connected with another no

family. Beer has been 'genteel' for many years ; so, surely, Mrs. Langley will not deny the claims of — of ——"

"Of spirituous liquors," said Minnie, as if she were actually reading the words from Mr. Dobson's shop front in Ship Street, Shrimpton.

"The truth is, Commerce is a mighty leveller," observed Tom.

"Say, rather, that Idleness and Luxury is the leveller, bringing down some, while Commercial Industry raises up others.—What is true of Brendon is, I suppose, true of great part of England ; and I have seen a gradual revolution in society during these last thirty years."

"But is all the elegance and refinement of life to be called indolence and luxury?" rejoined Tom.

"No, no ; I know what you would say. Certainly not ; but the thing may be overdone. Providence designs gardens of roses as well as fields of corn ; the gaudy butterfly as well as the busy bee. But, notwithstanding, I say, that if nearly half of this neighbourhood has of late years changed from the condition of butterfly to the condition of bee, I see nothing less than the tendency of nature to adjust the balance."

"I suppose we must be resigned," said Minnie ; "but, really, the breaking up of these

good old families is a great loss to the arts and elegancies of life."

"Indeed you would not say so if you had my experience; though, if they would take a little care to remain worthy of the name of 'good old families,' it were another matter. But take the case of ——"

"Of Gottingen Hall?" said Minnie, very artfully.

"Fie! fie! Mrs. Langley! But be it so. Mortgage upon mortgage had eaten up the estate; all had become poverty-stricken; all was hollow, carious, and rotten at the core — all was pretence and affectation. The mission and province of such a family is to set a good example and a high standard of honour, integrity, and Christian virtues — to promote education, to encourage the arts and sciences, to make experiments, and extend the use of new inventions — to do much that tends to eventual wealth at the cost of present sacrifice — to promote taste and refinement, and to show 'that life is more than meat, and the body than raiment;' in a word, to set up the intellectual and the spiritual above the things of sense and sordid feeling."

"This being their mission, you would say they fell short in the discharge of it."

“Certainly. Such power and position are both a privilege and a snare. ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into’ the true spirit and purpose of the economy of the Most High! So, at last, the temptation proves too great for the trust. Still, they held their place long after they had betrayed their trust. The influence of name, and family, and old associations propped them up. At last the parish was falling into a state of ruin; there was no life or circulation: all was stagnation, poverty, and decay—no church restoration could be effected—no schools, clubs, or social improvements of any kind were supported, and all public spirit was fast dying out. The four Miss Hardynges, too poor to marry in their own order, and ‘*too proud*’ to marry out of it, wanted to be Plymouth Sisters, Lady Perverts, or, in short, anything but what they were.”

“Oh, fie!” said Minnie. “Now, I am afraid you are satirical, Mr. Farren.”

“No, no! Really I do not mean to be so,” rejoined the Rector, seriously. “It is not I who say ‘*too proud*’: these are not my words. I speak with pity, and I should rather say ‘too refined,’ ‘too sensitive,’ ‘too highly organised.’—Yes, those changes in society bear very cruelly upon the ladies. From the more genial climes of

taste and elegance—from a sphere where every word and every thought is tempered or modulated to the exact tone of our feelings, to the colder regions and the ruder paths of a hard and laborious life, where a rougher dialect bears witness to daily struggles in a world of jar and discord—this is, indeed, too severe a fall for a delicately-nurtured young lady to contemplate.”

“ Well, and what is the remedy for this cruel state? Ladies without number would thank our Rector for the solution.”

“ The remedy is a providential one. Things at their worst must mend. Now comes a crash,—the state of sham must change to a state of reality—a family pining in idleness must be thrown into a state to be useful; and thus Providence, I say, finally dislocates and breaks up the whole falsetto system. They had traded on the name of Hardynges Hardynges, of Hardynges Hall, till the very shadow failed for want of substance. Then came the estate to the hammer, and Mr. Holland was the purchaser. Immediately, the whole of this side of the county felt the better for the change. Experimental farming and model cottages, church repairs, and schools, with orders for things requiring taste and talent in the workman—all became the order of the day.”

While this conversation was going on, Tom observed that Minnie became rather thoughtful and serious. The explanation is, that the Rector's remarks proved rather trying to her feelings; for, the description of the difficulties of the Hardyng family struck her as applying rather painfully to the outward show, but real embarrassments, of the home she had so lately left.

But, as to Tom's original question, Mr. Farren proceeded to say, that, however little the style and sentiments of the families from Birmingham or Sheffield might be to his taste, still the path of wisdom and the path of duty clearly led to the same point; namely, to determine upon receiving them with kindness and cordiality—to honour them for the position they had achieved, and to endeavour to make them happy in it: "least of all should you allow a word—one word, I may say——"

"I quite understand you," rejoined Tom; "not a word about *Gottingen Palace*. Certainly not. Either visit them or do not visit them. And you say that this mixture of races—this descent from the North——"

"We must not allow one word about any invasion of the *Goths*," suggested Minnie, with look of well-simulated awe at the Rector; who promptly replied,—

"Otherwise you must also confess to the 'less vigorous, the luxurious, and the degenerate people of the South.'"

"You would maintain, however," rejoined Tom, "that as to these different races—of the new world and the old—whether they blend or not, yet here they are, as a mighty fact. Well, that being the case, we must try to sympathise."

"Yes, and you will find," concluded the Rector, "that an infusion of hard-headed sense into this dull country neighbourhood, as also a little wider experience in the affairs of life, is no slight counterpoise—even if you should happen to observe a little difference in tone, taste, and refinement."

By this time it will be seen that our Rector was a man of comprehensive mind, and a very observing character. He had so thorough a knowledge of the world, that men began to wonder how any parson could be so truly wide-a-wake. All those multitudinous and most troublesome people, who call with "cheap wine for the clergy," "cheap clothes for the clergy," or "cheap insurance for the clergy," were received simply with a significant smile, and a quiet bow out at the door.

Another class of applicants, briefless barristers, half-pay captains, and other travellin



deputations of the green-baize school, staggered by the placid incredulity of his look, and by his sincere congratulations on "a vocation so truly satisfactory,"—(meaning) "as travelling about the country at the expense of the fund, and eating and drinking at the expense of the clergy,"—could hardly get out half their old request for a meeting, with the Rector as Chairman, to remedy some evil, which no one had ever thought of before.

"This man," said Mr. Holland, "hears a proposition, turns it inside out, and examines both sides of it, like a Bradford salesman with some fancy goods. How can he ever have mixed with the world enough to learn such ways?"

Fred Audrey thought the Rector a wonder, simply because he lived without the usual clerical cloud before his eyes, and saw everything from a layman's point of view. Not that the said cloud is the fault of the clergy, but rather of the laity, who do persist in frowning the clergy out of all positions in which they could gain any clear and healthy views of men and things and do persist in thrusting them among the women and children of society: but the rays of Mr. Farren's vision dispersed all such clouds into air. He walked and talked like another

man, with an open, an honest, and a perfectly week-day expression of countenance.

Fred Audrey once observed to the Rector, that there was something he could not make out in him—his views of things were so different. He seemed worldly-wise, and wise in Scripture at the same time: and the two kinds of wisdom, he remarked, seemed marvellously to combine and to help each other.

“For this there are two reasons,” said the Rector: “the first is that, in early life, I was two years chaplain to a man-of-war, and by seeing human nature in various lands, my eyes became too widely opened for the soporific influence of a country parish to close them again.”

And what was the second source of worldly wisdom?

Reading the Bible as it is—as the key to the mysteries of this world as well as of the world to come. People say that I am singular in my opinions: their creed seems to be that, By *logic* are ye saved—and by very bad logic too; or, at least, by certain cabalistic phrases; and, nowadays, a good, humble soul, wiser in heart than head, a comfort to come across, qu a blessing to meet in a morning's walk,

kindness, equity, and 'Christian charity'—they seem to think that this is quite secondary, and no good sign at all."

After a pause he continued,—

"It puzzles me to explain where people learn such views. It can only be that they read, as it were, through coloured spectacles, and see with the rays of truth refracted, because enveloped in the mist of traditions, High or Low. I often think of the fable in Cowper's poems, beginning with—

'Betwixt eyes and nose  
A strange contest arose,  
To which the said spectacles ought to belong;'

and the compromise was, that 'when the spectacles were put on the eyes should be shut.' Reading the Bible alone in my cabin, while bounding triumphantly, as a parishioner of the wide, wide world, over the pathless ocean—this had a peculiar effect on my mind. I then had time for thought, and I learnt to look at it like a chart for the voyage of life, and as something to explain the ways and wheels of all its vast machinery."

"And this is the reason we hear you quoting scripture; not as so much cant, but as so much

wisdom—to explain every phase of society, and smooth every rough point in the life of man?”

“ You have, indeed, hit the truth.”

If the reader knows the world, he will conclude that such a Rector might have one or two strong admirers and supporters, but he could not have been generally popular. Indeed, strong-minded parsons rarely are popular among country squires—the men of many acres—“ men of the world,” as they call themselves; a term which means men who have been taught none but the “ terrestrial globe,” and only the sordid and the sensuous “ quarter” even of that part of the world. Such men claim, quite as a matter of course, to hold their opinions against the parson of the parish. But before Mr. Farren they blinked as owls before the light. So they felt not only disappointed but astonished, and jumped to the conclusion that their Rector was a man of strange opinions, and could not possibly be orthodox, simply because he happened to be sensible.

However, the Rector was a man of the most kindly sympathies, where all was genuine in character. He was fond of the society of young persons, and a very good adviser, though never forward with his advice. His belief was, that the proper definition of experience was “ burnt

fingers,"—and, since we could not feel any sufficient smart by proxy, no real good was done by endeavouring to teach young people to avoid certain hilly stages in the road of life: so true was it—as he paraphrased the words,—“that it was only by ‘much tribulation’ that we can find our proper place and bearings in our appointed sphere of action.”

Such was the character of the Rector's mind. But the compass of his judgment, however true and trustworthy, was subject to a certain variation. In other words, this wise man had a wife, whose subtle and persevering influence made his life a little less philosophical, and therefore a great deal more interesting, than it would have been: and to some extent it bore the anomalous appearance of a compromise between what he would and what he could perform.

Everybody said that the Rector ought to have married quite a different sort of woman, though some admitted that it was marvellous how well he got on with her. Indeed, we have always observed that everybody does claim a right even to choose the proper wife for the parson: for, as to any feeling of sentiment or fancy, or any liability to be fascinated like other men—instead of thinking solely of soup and blanket qualifications—this they think the Bishops should not allow.

We pass on to the time when they had sat up in state, and received and returned all the calls. Minnie found it easy to distinguish between the new families and the old; still, with all her preference for the ease, the composure, and the intuitions of the latter, she could not resist the fascination of dresses and equipage, which betrayed the greater affluence of the former. It is true she made a few private observations, how she "should just like to make a little alteration" in the ornaments of one or the drapery of another: still, even without much taste, an unlimited purse at Howell and James's will produce an effect that can hardly fail to excite the admiration, if not the envy, of any young lady with no more experience than Minnie.

But as to taste, it is an error to suppose this must needs be wanting in the families of retired manufacturers or men of business. Ladies—whether ladies by birth or ladies by courtesy—are very apt scholars, and learn, to a certain point, very fast. Besides, Minnie observed a marked difference between the mother and the daughters in more instances than one.

"As to Mrs. Holland," said Minnie, after returning one day from a little tour of discovery, "it is easy to see that she has just learnt to sit down and arrange herself, and a few things c

that sort ; and as to her conversation, after a few set phrases with suitable bows and bends, and looks, and 'tip-top quality manners,' as the Vicar of Wakefield says, she fairly runs herself out ; and —— but I am afraid you will say I am too satirical if I tell you what I *did* hear."

"I suppose my morals can endure the shock," said Tom, more curious than ever.

"Well then, my dear, Mrs. Farren declares, that when the Member for the County, or any one of the same standing, is on a visit at Gotting—oh, dear ! at Hardyngge Hall, I should say, but I quite forgot—the mamma 'has a headache,' or 'takes to her bed,' as soon as she has gone through her little collection of fascinations and fidgetings, and has no more ease of manners left, and then she leaves her daughters to entertain her company ; for they really have—Emily Holland especially—a very fair variety, by the time they have rung all the changes."

"Now you are satirical, indeed !" said Tom.

"No. Seriously, I like the girls very much. There is nothing to laugh at in them. They have not only been Frenched, and Musicked, and Deportmented, and so on through all the list of 'extras,' but they have also had—as I suppose their papa would express it—their 'illicit spirits

rectified' and their ideas 'clarified' by all the society of their Belgravian schoolfellows."

By such little private conversation as this, Tom and Minnie, like other young persons, were not too great-minded to amuse themselves in a good-natured way; still, we never should have carried on their acquaintance if they had not cordially acted up to the Rector's code of social morals. Minnie was too kind and generous, and Tom was too fond of fair play, to ridicule those he agreed to visit.

Once *sub trabe citreâ*, by which Horace is by some supposed to mean, when a man has once placed his legs under his neighbour's "mahogany" he is bound to treat him with respect. Indeed, if Tom saw any man guilty of doing otherwise, he used to characterise him from the words of the old song, and would say that he treated his friend like Ulysses with the Cyclops—first he ate his mutton, and then he poked his eye out!

And now Minnie began to realise her position, with all the full-blown dignity of a married woman. Above all things she prided herself upon her taste, and Tom also prided himself on the fact that, if he did not quite understand drawing-room elegancies himself, he, at events, had a wife who did.



Add to this, Tom and Minnie were "spirited young people," and had no idea of being out-done by those around them. They had also a secret ambition, if they did visit "the late creations," to let them see that a mere vulgar blaze of gilt frames and looking-glass, and what Tom called "upholsterers' taste," could be easily distanced by those who had the advantage of them in point of early experience.

The idea of cost never entered their minds, still less that one expense often wanted another to keep it company, and that a certain proportion must be observed in the scale of expenditure: but this little oversight was very excusable: most young married couples find that such knowledge only breaks in upon them by degrees.

First of all, new curtains might have been dispensed with, but when Tom had been "such a dear creature" as to offer satin damask, of the most delicate shade possible—fit only to be handled by "the rosy-fingered Aurora," of whom he had so often construed in Homer—why, then, a new carpet became a positive necessity; and after the new carpet had been laid down, curtains and carpet together stared the looking-glass and the paper quite out of countenance; and by the time the glass and the paper were replaced,

it was voted that the drawing-room must be new altogether.

But, even this was not all. For who could have an old-fashioned dining-room and a modern drawing-room? or, this done, who could pass from one to the other room save by a renovated passage and staircase? What would Mr. Butterworth say to this, or what would Mrs. Butterworth and her four daughters—who came out two and two, and yet never wore each other's ornaments, so easy and affluent were their circumstances—say to that?

The Rector saw what was going on; still, far as his prophetic vision could dive into the future, he was wise enough to restrain himself and keep away, and talk of something else. But what was his dismay, after a few days, to find his most visionary wife, one of those ladies who live in an ideal world of their own, where poetry, music, taste, and enthusiasm are everything, and pounds, shillings, and pence are nothing but a sordid, plebeian way of viewing things, and a cruel damper on the creatures of a loftier and more ethereal state of being—when he saw that she was admitted to their counsels! The affrighted Rector actually dropped in upon her in a fit of her most thrilling excitement, leading on Minnie and showing her

the way to change this, or to turn out and make a decided alteration in the other little arrangement—all quite at the wild suggestions of her own romantic nature!

The Rector stood aside for a while, and looked on with dismay at the projected clearance of respectable mahogany and rosewood—all in keeping with the old family house—all consistent with the rents of the small estate, and all ten times more respectable than any modern upholstery, which could never be made to harmonise with the fine old rooms. The good man reflected that the splendour of “the Newcomes” had turned everybody’s head. It was extravagance originally that had broken up their society, and made way for the few who were cutting a dash among them; and now these were exciting envy and rivalry, and, in effect, were teaching more extravagance, to ruin or to beggar all the old families who were left!

As to Minnie’s adviser, he painfully reflected that his own Mary Anne was one of the most dangerous possible, inasmuch as she was one of those ladies who can honestly boast of great “administrative talent,” but, unfortunately, must plead guilty of an utter ignorance of finance.

“We don’t want you, Mr. Rector. This is quite the wrong place for gentlemen,” said Mrs.

Farren. And then turning to Minnie she said, "My dear Mrs. Langley, my husband is quite a wet blanket in all matters of taste or elegance."

"I never interfere in my neighbours' affairs," was the reply; "I only hope that it is not my wife who has made such a mistake as to persuade Mrs. Langley that her home was not quite equal to the scale of Brendon before."

Very little more passed at the time, but the same evening the Rector remarked to his wife that he was afraid she had been conveying a false impression of the style of the place, and leading a young married lady into very unnecessary expense.

"Now that just shows you know nothing about it, my dear," exclaimed his Mary Anne, with an energy enough to blow all reasoning up the chimney: "our charming Mrs. Langley is a decided acquisition. They are just such a young couple as we have long wanted at Brendon. The new Shopocracy are having it all their own way, and if I cannot animate you with a proper spirit of pride and emulation, I am delighted to find some, at least, who will uphold the respectability of the place."

The Rector had little to say. Borne down by a flood of words, and utterly despairing ever bringing his hallucinated wife back t

earth, he simply remarked that the said Shopocracy, having all the money, must soon have all the influence; and he grieved over the folly of those who were evidently beggaring themselves in vying with persons who had positively to purchase that place in society which the older families securely enjoyed before.

After recording this protest for the benefit of the tables and chairs, the wise man beat a retreat into his study; his constant resource to calm down the little commotions which his wife so often would raise within him. The power of books was wonderful with Mr. Farren.—He could read away a toothache at any time—so, at least, his wife had been known to say.

All these wild doings at Langley Hall he soon had an opportunity of ventilating, in a conversation with Fred Audrey. “But then,” said the Rector, “I am tired of being so wise. All that we deem waste, no doubt Providence can catch in some mighty and stupendous save-all. There must be some great and mysterious use in folly, or we should not see so much of it. People, like my dear wife, are, we may be quite sure, intended for some wise purpose, after all: or, it takes all kinds of people to make a world.”

“That is to say, you think,” said the lawyer,

“that it was never intended that all England should live on the Three-and-a-quarter per Cents, with one half-year always in hand?”

“I suspect not. Why, what a dull, flat, and dead level — what a Quaker-like world, this would be! No — no — certainly not,” he added, thoughtfully. “If it were all prudence and all propriety, that would never do. If sober sense were never to indulge in an extra glass — no — no — assuredly not,” he continued, still abstracted, musing, and thoughtful — “but — but, no fear of that, Mr. Audrey — you and I know well that nine tenths of the misery, as also of the temptations of life, proceed from the excess lying altogether on the other side.”

“Yes,” said Audrey, “all comes from always living at full stretch and strain; or, to use your own favourite expression, being always at *Agony Point*.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

HOW TOM LANGLEY UNDERGOES A LITTLE WHOLESOME DISCIPLINE OF THE MILDEST FORM.

"ALL the world's" not only "a stage," but "a *school*;" and, now that Tom Langley had settled down as a respectable family-man, the discipline began to tell upon him.

When once a man has taken to himself a wife, he has given bail for his good behaviour. He soon finds that he is tied and bound by cords invisible; he is linked to the order of substantial men; he lives — and often the first time — for others: and, self gives way in spite of self. He learns to move more cautiously, as if he were vulnerable at many new points; he must conform to early hours, and keep up appearances, even to the very buttons of his tea-boy.

Tom Langley soon became sensible of this great law of wedded life. He began to realise the description shadowed forth by Sir Edward

Alex. For, from the time Tom had qualified as a married man, he found a decided change in every one about him. There was a general sensation—such as, “Of course you will do this,” —“Of course you would not think of doing that,” —whereas, while he was a bachelor, no one cared what he did. Nay, to affect a little levity, not to say laxity of conduct, seemed to be—so frail is the world!—positively a recommendation to him: it made him amusing and interesting rather than otherwise, while a single man.

But now, all was changed. The prevailing idea now seemed to be, You are no longer a boy—there is an end of all indulgences—so now you must behave like one of us.

Hospitality also seemed to have vanished quite. Here was another very observable change. There was no more of the open-house hospitality—no more of the luncheon and the tea, as well as the formal dinner—no more of the “dropping in at any time;” when with every invitation he was made to feel as if his company alone were a return enough for any body;—all, all of this was altered. It was now more of a commercial matter—party for party, dinner for dinner; and even the courses and the wine must be at least so attempt at an equivalent—a truth rather to plainly and unpoetically expressed by one of



gentleman, who spoke of a large dinner-party as a general clearance, or "a meeting of creditors."

All this was experienced by the hero of our present instructive history. For when a young colt, long free to roam and prance about the fields, to snort defiance, and to play and frisk, exulting in its liberty, is once caught and trained to use its limbs to other paces, to obey the slightest movement of a rein, and even in its food and water, its lying down and rising up, to become the creature of ways and habits capriciously imposed—the change experienced is not very different from that of Tom Langley, as of many another light-hearted bachelor, when once settled down as a married man.

If any one had ever told Tom that he ever should have submitted to this—that he ever should allow himself to be in any sense tacked on to a woman's apron-string, he would not have believed it. Nay, after he was married, the very suspicion of such a thing would have made him take the latch-key, stay out late, and perhaps claim the right of not saying where he had been, or do any other foolish thing, just to realize his unfettered liberty. But it was not one apron-string, it was twenty or more that held Tom in ether—and these the more potent, because neither seen nor thought of, either by himself

or others. Again, would any one dare to insinuate that Tom Langley cared for the morning gossip of a parcel of old women, male or female? No, not he! At least, so he thought; but since the honest feelings and heartfelt sentiments of our fellow-men and women will find vent and definite expression—each lending its several breeze to swell the steady, resistless current of public opinion—the effect was the same as if Tom did mind, inasmuch as he proved insensibly to spread his sails to catch this wind. In other words, he shaped his conduct to the will, and shaped his course to the ways, of the place and people among whom he lived.

One of these little occasions of champing at the bit and throwing up his head impatiently at the rein, which, after all, he could not shake off, was as follows:—Minnie soon found that Tom had certain bachelor habits much too common among London men in these days. His friends, living in the Albany and other chambers, rarely went to church; though, when the Sunday is unhallowed, and allowed to slip idly by between newspaper and dressing-gown, a lounge in the Park, and an evening at a club, a man becomes demoralised fast indeed.

Happy was it for Tom he was snatched away from this foul stream, and this deadly, blightir

atmosphere. Single men, without any settled establishments, sit lightly on the world. Even at Shrimpton, his absence from church was either unnoticed, or the subject of a "Fie, fie!" more in jest than earnest. But now, all is changed.

First of all he went to Brendon church, as it were to enter an appearance for the new family at Langley Hall, or as the bridegroom and his bride. But soon Minnie found him, when Sunday morning came, "indisposed," — "having something to do," or "a letter to write," or "not quite in a mood," or the like; only, in one material respect, things were altered now.

Tom was free, as before, to do as he pleased on a Sunday, and not to go to church any oftener than he liked; but the great difference was, that he was no longer, by any means, as comfortable in his feelings when he stayed at home. Minnie's last look of disappointment tried him hard, as she stood with her Prayer-book and parasol, the very picture of a pure and devoutly-minded English lady—seen never to more advantage than on a fine Sunday morning on her way to the village church. We can see Minnie at this moment holding the door in her hand, and saying, with a lingering look,— "So, cannot prevail upon you to come, dear?"

Then, some one inquired after Mr. Langley, as to whether he was not well ; and Minnie betrayed the pain with which she heard the remark,—“ Dear me, Mr. Langley’s complaints are always on a Sunday !” Sometimes he would stroll out to meet her as she was coming home ; on these occasions, he would never go far enough to meet any one else. Few men can bear to meet the church-going throng, so strong is the inclination to “ pass by on the other side :” but, last of all, he heard some one who, he felt sure, was quite unconscious of his presence, casually remarking to a lady who had long resided in France, that in English society religious observances at the present day are essential to the very position of a gentleman, and that a man who did not go to church was generally set down as a bad subject, and quite a black sheep.

After this Minnie was perfectly happy on a Sunday, and not the less conscious of a wholesome influence, because, as she sallied forth in all the serene composure of a fine Sunday-walk to church, she also enjoyed the natural satisfaction and the honest pride of a married woman.

This was only one way in which the newly-married man was “ won by the chaste convention ” of his wife—only one way in which Minnie warmed a once selfish heart, kindly

many a dormant spark from her own celestial fire—only one way in which she taught him to find pleasure in courses not exclusively his own, and to be drawn a willing captive by the cords of love.

And all this time, what was the life of the companions from whom he had been mercifully snatched away?—One heartless, soulless, and desperate career, in all that would numb the conscience, paralyse the feelings, and cramp the heart. “Evil producing evil continually”—one anxious endeavour to shut out reflection—one vain but restless attempt to fly from self!

We dwell on this, just as one instance of the new *régime*, and as a fair exemplification of the conscious responsibilities of married life. And in course of time Tom would argue with Minnie about the sermon—read, and be read to in the evening, and have a gathering of the servants.

This was not done without a little quiet talk between Minnie and the Rector.

“Leave the matter to me,” said Mr. Farren. “Next Easter I shall claim to appoint Mr. Langley as my churchwarden; that will clench the nail you have so meritoriously”—Minnie flushed—“contrived to drive home; and after that we shall go on swimmingly. No doubt,

Mrs. Langley, women were intended to humanize men."

Minnie, too, began to find that her married dignity had its burthens and grave responsibilities. For, though Tom knew nothing about housekeeping, he was not the less critical about the cooking, or impatient if things were behind time.

"If the maids do not suit you, all you have to do, Minnie," he said, "is to give them warning!"

The consequence was precisely what Mrs. Farren foretold—the house was a perfect thoroughfare. It was in at one door, and out at the other. She changed their faces, not their faults; and the place was fast getting such a name for "fidgeting and worriting," as one saucy girl expressed it, that, a little more, and no one would have offered for the situation.

Minnie began to feel very uneasy: she knew that all eyes were upon her, and she thought she perceived a little dash of satire in the inquiries, as to how she liked the servants of those parts! Minnie, however, was far too spirited to be beaten; and her sense of shame and emulation inspired her with a degree of energy and resolution that made up for many of her disadvantages.

Mrs. Farren, who had always a superfluity to blow off for the relief, not only of herself but of her husband, was delighted to explain all her plans, and Minnie soon learnt to prevent divers evils, which she might try in vain to cure.

Mr. Farren, while making a quiet tour of the garden one day, gave Minnie his theory of housekeeping and maid-servants. He said,—

“Only walk round my parish, and enter with me the cottages in which they were ‘not brought up, but dragged up,’ as Charles Lamb says—see how blows, and shakings, and oaths, and bad names, are all their discipline in mind, in manners, and in temper; and, above all, how dirt and discomfort are the very condition of their lives. Fancy the same young women, having to comply with a nicety of taste they cannot appreciate, and to be obedient to family rules, after having been all their lives as wild as colts every hour of the day. Supposing that they were tuned to the exquisite sensibility of taste and perception which we enjoy—with the same eye for neatness and the same ear for sounds of slamming doors, or were their sense of smell to be offended, instead of gratified, by the odour of nner—the poor creatures could not possibly list.

“Such, then, are country servants. So, if

you will have tables covered with ornaments, and Louis Quatorze furniture, you must train every servant who enters your house."

Minnie remarked, that she had no idea of the difficulty in finding servants equal to her requirements.

"The truth is," said the Rector, "we are 'going ahead' too fast. Brendon servants and Brendon style did well enough together. But now, things are all in confusion. Our old neighbours have copied the habits of Belgravia, without the servants and appliances to boot. The class required we cannot afford. You want respectable tradesmen's daughters, trained under housekeepers—persons of expensive habits, who would not be satisfied to live here unless with a large and busy establishment, with many visitors, and the prospect of a change to the seaside, or to London once a-year. The consequence is,

'Bubble, bubble; toil and trouble;'

ease and comfort there are none. We are slaves to our tables and chairs—living constantly on the fret, and all at *agony point*—in one anxious endeavour to drive our simple village friends of their proper nature."

Now Minnie's eyes began to open to



Brendon state of things, more especially when she found visible proofs that the same hands that had black-leaded the grate had also been applied to her new damask satin curtains!—Still, her drawing-room—saving these horrid finger-marks—did look so pretty, that she felt she could afford to take a little trouble to keep it in proper order. More than one lady had declared that, in point of taste and elegance, all the wealth of “the Newcomes” could not rival Langley Hall, and Minnie could endure a great deal after that.

When a high-spirited young lady has gained a character for excellence in one thing on which she prides herself, we all know that she will spare no pains to maintain it in another—but this must form the subject of a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THEY GIVE THEIR FIRST COUNTRY DINNER-PARTY, AND FIND IT QUITE A SERIOUS UNDERTAKING.

“MAN is a social animal:” so say the philosophers; and who does not sympathize with Robinson Crusoe in his solitude, and feel that he is the happiest of mortal men, when at last he has contrived to make acquaintance with a savage?

But, one reason the world at large is so fond of the company of other persons is, that they are so soon tired of their own.

Solitary confinement is the severest, almost, of all punishment, and the most trying to the mind. Under this infliction, the whole man begins superficially to creep; his nervous system is reduced to a state of morbid sensibility. He becomes, as it were, one complicated electric telegraph—the wires innumerable being

charged with a several message of horror and of woe.

Now, the nearest approach to solitary confinement, since the days of hermitages, that men ever have encountered by their own act and deed, is committed when we take up our quarters in a lone country house.

Whenever we are whirled along a railway, and see one of those patrician mansions, with spacious greenhouses, grounds, lodges, and fences, and all, in short, that commonly excites envy by the independence and the exclusiveness of the proprietor — the reflection which invariably thrusts itself upon our mind is simply this :— It is all very fine ; but the great drawback is, being expected to live in such a place !

It would seem a very bold thing to assert that scarcely any one ever does, of his own free consent, live long together in a country house. The common custom of the proprietors is either to invite so many visitors, that they virtually turn the country into a town, or else to go away to London, or take a tour on the Continent, and so they embrace every opportunity of shutting their house up altogether.

Still, many country families cannot afford to run away, and nearly all must feel obliged for

some portion of the year to live upon their estates.

On such occasions the social propensities of man make most convulsive, most desperate efforts, to find, if not the true pleasures of society, at least the best imitation, of which their untoward circumstances may admit.

These spasmodic efforts were particularly observable in the neighbourhood of Brendon. Indeed, what people would submit to, and with heroic patience undergo, in order to run away from themselves, or in order to avoid a long evening with their own husbands, wives, or families, as also to ventilate their opinions and display their dresses and ornaments before other persons, was really surprising.

As to a good dinner, a dinner-party proper, we have heard it seriously maintained, that it is there that a man passes some of the happiest hours of his life. And the argument is, that at these pleasurable moments no one ever wishes that he was anywhere else.

Certainly, a dinner forms the climax of every most enjoyable day. Whether it has been a day of hunting, shooting, or even racing—however excited or happy we may have been, still, the time when we are comfortably seated to talk it over

and to recruit our flagging, exhausted spirits, or to enjoy the pleasures of tranquillity and repose, this, certainly, is usually found to be a most agreeable winding-up—so genial is the fusion of mind with mind, so generous the response of heart with heart.

But then, the dinner itself must, however inviting, be quite secondary. It must be chiefly and ostensibly “the feast of reason and the flow of soul,” and the sparkling wines must tend to yet more sparkling wit. As to seeing so many persons indulging their aldermanic propensities—so many carnivorous animals at feeding-time, and that, too, in a party formed not only of hungry men keen from the field, but actually of ladies—the idea is most repulsive, and utterly inconsistent with the civilisation and the refinement of the present era.

Still, the Brendon dinner-parties were too much of this low type, of this profane and secular description. Indeed, even at this distance of time, much as the elegance of our tables owes to the Russian style—which is partially if not entirely adopted more and more generally—still, the quantity of things you are offered is so uncomplimentary to our habits of moderation, that the polite world has still room for considerable improvement.

However, if ever there was a time and place in which people deserved a good dinner, it was after driving the distances common in those parts through rutty lanes to reach the house whose turn it was to be filled with "the society of the neighbourhood."

Such being the state of things, it must be understood that Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Langley had been settled nearly a year, and had had time to be invited by all the circle, as also to make their observations of the style most common with the "new creations," as well as with the old; and as Minnie was not wanting in power of observation, she had full leisure for deciding how to do things with taste and effect when it came—as it soon must—to their turn to receive the "dinner set."

There are some things that look all very simple till we try; neither is there anything more easy than to criticise at our leisure, and to suggest a little improvement, when all the time we may have very little idea of the many things that must be done, and the many blunders that must be avoided, before we can do anything half as well as that which we affect to despise.

A handsome dinner of many courses, all so comfortable, and well conducted, is especially case in point.

Our young friends saw nearly the same kind of dinner wherever they went. It is true, the made dishes might be cold and trashy at the Grantleys' and hot and exquisite at the Hollands'; still, there they were. Good or bad, there was no denying that Mrs. Grantley had filled up her table according to the understood laws of reciprocity, and the fair give-and-take principle of Brendon.

As to the degree of facility with which a dinner was provided at the Hollands'—with a butler for the wine and the plate—footmen daily accustomed to a large family—a *chef* who had underlings at his command, instead of a red-faced, helter-skelter broiling cook—besides a housekeeper for the tea and coffee, lights, flowers, arrangements, scoldings, seeing things done as well as ordered, and holding with the butler one comprehensive check over everything—this our young friends did not very particularly consider. Still less did they think of the extreme hardship of the same style of dinner being expected where one man-of-all-work and two Brendon maids—and even establishments so limited did try to follow suit—constituted the entire local force, and where a leg of mutton and a plain pudding did not allow even them much opportunity of practice.

However, live and learn is the rule of this

world ; and when people, however foolishly, have once placed themselves in an absurd and perplexing position, it is wonderful how they do put forth their dormant energies, or how they exult in the discovery that, with real determination to succeed, things have a kind of benevolent and good-natured tendency to shake right after all.

About this time it happened that the Rector and his energetic Mary Anne had been from home, and had just returned.

The first morning, Mrs. Farren came down to breakfast furnished — as is very common in other places as well as at Brendon Parsonage — with a little epitome of local news, derived from the maid while busied with her pins and strings, and hooks and eyes ; and feeling primed with a matter of importance, she began at once to hold a little conversation with her thoughtful and abstracted husband.

He was a man, be it remembered, of great mind ; only the mind is an instrument altogether unlike the trunk of the elephant, which is able alike to pick up a pin or to root up an oak. For, little things and trivial subjects worry and annoy great minds, and draw forth anything but complacent answers ; which fact in mental philosophy Mrs. Farren never dreamt of, and the fore she was always complaining that she r



wedded to the most moody and the most unsympathetic partner that woman ever had encountered.

This sanguine and enthusiastic lady had hardly seated herself when a dialogue began, as follows :—

*Wife.* “Well, my dear, from what I hear from Jane, it is a pity we did not come home before.”

*Rector.* “What! has there been any quarrelling, or any broken heads in the parish?”

*Wife.* “Nonsense!—What common ideas you have! You don’t think in the least about the society of the place, I declare you don’t!”

*Rector.* “The society! Call it the eating and drinking of the place. To exchange ideas is one thing,—but a mere game of ‘Commerce,’ or ‘Beggar-my-neighbour,’ I should rather say, carried on with wines and made dishes, is another.”

*Wife.* “That is the provoking way in which you everlastingly will talk. But I know you are always interested in anything affecting the Langleys.”

*Rector* (brightening up). “Anything affecting the Langleys, did you say? What! has the arm broken upon them at last? Poor Mrs. Langley!—But, who has said anything about it, you?”

*Wife* (not in the least understanding the nature of her husband's alarms, or the quarter from which danger threatened). "Storm broken upon them, indeed! Well, I would not be such a prudent, ready-money, and one-quarter-in-hand character as you are, my dear, for all the world. Why, you are continually expecting everybody to ruin himself! Just as if a little decent furniture—if I did recommend it—could ruin a young couple all in a year! But what will you say to their dinner-party, fixed for the end of this month?"

*Rector* (much relieved). "Dinner-party!—Oh! that's all, is it? Well, and are you not quite in time for a finger in that pie, too? Yes, go and help your young friend there, and I will say something to you, since they will do such things: for there is a week's hard work for Mrs. Langley at the very least."

*Wife*. "As to my being quite in time—I am really afraid that I am not in time. They have actually sent out their notes, and never inquired whether they can have either Mr. Thompkin's man or the vergers. Now, my dear, it is your turn at the Cathedral to-morrow, and you will be sure to see the three vergers who go waiting; so, can't you just say a word in case accident?"

—The idea of the Canon of a cathedral engaging waiters in the nave upon a Sunday was too much for the Rector's gravity, and as he smiled in the way of a good-natured remonstrance, the lady continued:—

“ You need not be so particular: they are quite used to all that kind of thing. Why, I can tell you, that when our friend, Col. C., was waiting for a sitting one Sunday, old Crumples—that's the verger with the red face and cauliflower nose—stepped up to him, very insinuating, and said, ‘ Please, sir, I can put you next that lady you took down to dinner, yesterday, if I shall, sir—there she is, on the right, one row back, with the green bonnet, sir.’ ”

*Rector* (holding himself up and looking very serious). “ Really this is too bad! — I never did approve of all this. I think, after what you say, I must positively speak to the Dean and put a stop to this going out waiting: it is not at all proper for these officials.”

*Wife*. “ There now! I wish I had not said anything at all about the vergers: but, I must entreat you to put up with these little cathedral improprieties till after the Langley's party. Now you won't tell, dear—will you, now? ”

The Rector's feelings of kindness, tenderness,

and goodnature, when once excited, in a matter of indifference, threw all his rigid sense of duty into a state of thaw, and the contest was as unequal as that between the sunbeams and an avalanche.

Mrs. Farren was not long before she hurried off to see Minnie; who by this time was appropriated by the Rector's wife—and that lady must always have some one—to serve as a kind of channel for the stream of her gushing words, and an occasional safety-valve for these energies, which must else have dashed and broken themselves against the more stubborn nature of the Rector.

To describe with any kind of minuteness or detail how these two lady-friends talked, with looks and gestures no less eloquent than words, were of course impossible.

Mrs. Farren found that Minnie's ideas were correct, even to the red-sprinkling of the lobsters and the turnip roses supposed to vegetate on the tongue. It might be all very true, as alleged so satirically against her, that while living with her father and mother, Minnie, like other young ladies, knew nothing of housekeeping: but that was more the fault of others than her own. Her parents encouraged her in nothing but accomplishments, and while with them the

was nothing to lead her to take any interest in the management of the house, or to feel her reputation in any way at stake.

But now Minnie had a house of her own. She was entrusted with plenary powers, and was mistress of the privy purse; and every married lady knows the honest pride and satisfaction which are felt, and the powers and capabilities that spring forth, wholly unknown before. Accordingly, when once her taste or her management was in question, she was by no means of a character to be surpassed in the contest. She now felt a real call and responsibility, and determined that her husband should see that he had no mere helpless school-girl for a wife.

All this was, so far, truly encouraging to Mrs. Farren: still, she saw that theory and practice, design and execution, were widely different things, more especially as regards dinner-parties; and Minnie might find herself utterly at a loss for want of deputies and vicegerents to give effect to her orders. This suspicion arose from the conversation following:—

*Mrs. Farren.* “Of course you have secured the cook for the eventful day—Wednesday three weeks, is it not?”

*Minnie.* “No, not yet. I knew I should soon

see you, and that you would advise me whom to engage."

*Mrs. Farren.* "Why, my dear child, there is but one cook you could dream of trusting, which is Mrs. Grabham! Pray, send off a special messenger this very day."

*Minnie* (alarmed). "I will certainly do so; but, perhaps, no one is very likely to want her on that exact day."

*Mrs. Farren.* "That exact day! That week, you mean, dear. Why, you have no idea what service is required of her! However, you have named a Wednesday, that is one lucky point; for that gives three clear days."

*Minnie.* "What, and must I engage this cook for all that time? Why, what can there be to do?"

*Mrs. Farren.* "You know, dear, I always like to keep on the safe side. So, besides Tuesday to prepare, and Wednesday for the dinner, I say, make sure of her on the Monday also; because then, with a little care, you may make tolerably certain of having Mrs. Grabham *sober*; and that is a great point, you will allow."

Here Minnie looked more astonished than ever: at which her friend continued,—

"But I don't think I ought to frighten y

too much, my dear, for Mrs. Grabham *can* cook in all kinds of state; indeed, it takes a great deal to put her quite *hors de combat*: only, if you had a fidgety husband, like mine, he would, no doubt, send her off to bed for the sake of the example, and so spoil the dinner entirely, out of his troublesome Dean-and-Chapter principles."

Minnie's eyes now began to open to the detail and the difficulties of the matter, neither did she let Mrs. Farren leave without thanking her again and again for her advice and information. She also gladly accepted her kind offer to help from time to time, till the party and its elegant arrangements "had proved a decided success, and had astonished all the neighbourhood out of their wits."

Now, for the first time, did Minnie begin to think of the serious work she had undertaken. Sixteen persons she must accommodate with space at the table—no easy matter: with plate, glass, china, and attendants—harder still, seeing that, if once these officials did not prove sober, or did turn sulky, all would be pronounced a grievous failure.

Minnie could hardly sleep for thinking of .. Her own cook already showed dangerous symptoms of being jealous of Mrs. Grabham's

interference; and John spoke in quite as depreciating a tone of the vergers and "the undertaker's man," for so he called the draper's assistant.

One morning Minnie had all the Langley plate set out; but it sadly wanted cleaning. The glass looked equally unprepossessing. To give that crystal appearance to the one and that brilliant whiteness to the other, which she had admired at Mrs. Holland's, it now glanced across her mind, wanted no common menial's hand. However, undaunted by difficulties, she stood by, encouraged, and assisted, and John and her own maid seemed fired with her own ardour, and emulation; and not least when she promised—which showed she was on the right tack—a treat in the kitchen if all went well.

And now the day of preparation had come, and Mrs. Grabham had come, too, with a bundle of clothes in one hand and a box in the other. This box contained the moulds, and shapes, and other tools of her trade, which were evidently intended partly for use, and partly to throw a little talismanic mystery over the whole performance. There was also in the said plenty of spare room for taking away a li more than she brought; for all kinds of or



and ends, it soon appeared, were Mrs. Grabham's perquisites.

"Perquisites!" said Minnie, with astonishment; "what does the woman mean by perquisites?"

"Hush, dear! or, if once you put her out," rejoined Mrs. Farren, in a shrill whisper, "her sweets and side-dishes won't be worth a farthing. Perquisites, of course, mean whatever she can steal. But on an occasion like this I quite agree with my most impracticable husband, 'If you can't shut your eyes for the three days, you must not think of having Mrs. Grabham.'"

Just as a ship in the Channel is given up to the pilot, even so was Minnie's kitchen and yet more, Minnie's will, ways, and right of private judgment, all resigned, with humble looks and "bated breath," to the despotic Mrs. Grabham.

"But do you think your husband will keep out of the kitchen?" asked Mrs. Farren, who thought all husbands must, of course, be very much alike, in their impatience of all dictation.

"Oh, yes!" replied Minnie; "for I will tell you what happened at the very first start. Mr. Langley, seeing something which, of course, I could not understand, exclaimed, 'Here,

Susan, take away that flannel petticoat : it doesn't look well in the kitchen.' ”

“ ‘ Bless us ! ’ cried Mrs. Grabham, with a jeer—‘ a deal you knows about dinners, sir ! Why, that's the jelly-bag ! ’—So you may trust him to be silent enough for the future.”

Indeed, it was as much as Tom could do to ride into Arminster on errands. Mrs. Grabham's indispensables were sure to be exactly what were never in the house ; and the more trouble she gave, the more important she appeared.

Next, Mrs. Grabham wanted wine or brandy in ridiculous proportions for everything. Minnie was horrified at such vulgar cookery ; whereupon Mrs. Grabham laid a most menacing hand on her bundle, as if she intended to take her offended dignity off ; and Minnie dexterously compounded by saying, that to show that she did not refuse for the value of the thing, she would give her some wine when the dinner was all over.

While all this was going on, the very morning of the party, Tom was called out from breakfast by a stranger who, the servant said, had come from Arminster, and must speak to Mr. Langley without delay.

Minnie's nerves had been more or less

the stretch ever since her invitations had been sent out: so, she thought something must be going wrong. These apprehensions were by no means diminished by Tom's looks, when he returned hastily for pen and ink.

"Has anything happened, my dear?" asked Minnie, eagerly.

"Nothing to talk of now," replied Tom, with a great effort not to betray any emotion.

"Nothing wrong about the vergers?"

"No: nothing."

"No difficulty about the turbot?"

"Something quite different," said Tom, glad to escape out of the door.

"Oh! then I don't care what it is," said Minnie, who at that moment little thought, that while the all-engrossing dinner was going right, anything at all worth thinking about in this mortal world could possibly go wrong.

The sad intelligence with which Tom Langley was affected, almost past all power of disguising his feelings, on this morning of the dinny-party, was the following:—

The managing clerk of the Messrs. Burroughs, the solicitors of Arminster, had been sent to inform him of the truly astounding and painful fact, that unless he would consent to become security for a debt of considerable amount, due

from Minnie's father, judgment had been obtained, and execution must follow without delay!

No wonder that a man, whose sense of shame and honour and whose nicer sensibilities had not yet lost their edge by witnessing, or being at all cognisant of such painful scenes, should feel utterly confounded and overcome.

To young persons, writs, distresses, executions, and all the peremptory and violent measures of the law, give a serious shock, and—as every lawyer knows—cause a degree of distraction that renders them utterly powerless to decide or act for themselves, and it is at such moments that many a man has set his signature to a deed of arrangement which has eventually involved himself in the common ruin.

It was fortunate for Tom Langley that it occurred to him at once to appoint a meeting with the clerk at Frederic Audrey's office.

The lawyer heard all that Tom had to say about sparing his dear wife's feelings and avoiding such a compromise of the respectability of the family, and then he told him that the occasion was one in which feeling utterly disqualified him from either seeing things as they really were or acting with common prudence; and the following explanations, bearing reference to Audrey

advice at the time of the marriage settlement, as well as to the present emergency, ensued:—

*Langley.* “Then, what can I possibly do, Mr. Audrey? Consider how I am connected with these rash and foolish people, both as to feeling and also as to my position in society!”

*Audrey.* “I know the state of Mr. Chester’s finances pretty well, and I am sure that he is too far gone to recover himself. I have been prepared for this break-up for these last two years.”

*Langley.* “And yet you never said a word to me at the time of drawing my marriage settlement!”

*Audrey.* “No. But, what was very significant, I did not propose that you should demand any settlement on their part.”

*Langley.* “Well, that did appear an omission on your part: and, after all, the reason was ——”

*Audrey.* “Because they had not an acre they could call their own, and ——”

*Langley.* “And, as I was engaged to be married, at all events ——”

*Audrey.* “Exactly so. I was unwilling to excite painful feelings without the least prospect of doing any good.”

*Langley.* “But, surely, you knew that no

man could marry into the family of a man living in the style of Mr. Chester, without considerable expectations being excited?"

*Audrey.* "And you think I should have undeceived you on this point? Surely you do not wish yourself unmarried? or appearances are fallacious, indeed."

*Langley.* "No, no, my dear friend," (with some emotion); "to have saved my dear wife from the trials and the troubles of her family—from the privations, I should say; for bitterly will she feel the blow—this—this—(and here he was almost choked by contending feelings).

*Audrey.* "Well done, my good sir! nobly and generously said! That is, indeed, like yourself! But—but, as to my own part in the matter, I am indeed in a dilemma."

*Langley.* "Say nothing about it, Audrey. I am sorry I made any observation. You know my implicit reliance on your judgment and advice."

*Audrey.* "Then allow me simply to say, that I really am not in fault on the present occasion. There are circumstances that will one day justify me: but a professional trust is a sacred one, and I will avail myself of your indulgence, and say more for my own exculpation."

This remark left no kind of distinct impr

sion on the mind of Tom Langley at the time : but all such vague hints and phrases have a natural tendency, at certain moments of our lives, to encourage castle-building of the aërial kind, or to swell the floating capital from which Hope draws all her flattering supplies.

It was about twelve o'clock that Tom returned home, and almost smiled, from a sense of the painful and ridiculous combined, when he saw all the flowers and plate and glass at that early hour, and all the rehearsal of the solemn—too solemn farce, in which he had that day to bear a part, and

“To carry smiles and sunshine in *his* face,  
While discontent sat heavy at *his* heart.”

Minnie remembered afterwards, though too much engrossed to be very observing at the time, that Tom did give her an unusually tender and almost a convulsive embrace ; but she took that to imply the exceeding delight and the overpowering satisfaction he felt in all her busy plans and tasteful arrangements ; and before she could say much to him, in a moment he was gone.

However, Tom Langley resolved that, even if his heart were in danger of bursting with the

effort, he must leave Minnie in happy ignorance of that, the very thoughts of which would render all her labour and anxiety in vain.

Not to keep the reader any longer in suspense, we must say at once, that Minnie's exertions were rewarded with complete success — her own cheerful spirits seemed, as usual, communicated to all about her. Mrs. Farren and her maid put the last touches to everything, while Minnie displayed her taste with the flowers and decorations.

The only thing that happened to ruffle Minnie — and such a thing was really trying, as it happened just at the last — was that Mrs. Farren came back breathless to say, that the said undertaker's man must positively not be allowed to wait: for, Mrs. Grantley, who had lately buried her husband, would perhaps get up a scene and go into fits. Still the three vergers said at once that he was always in the way, and they could do much better without him.

What we would chiefly point out is, that the success was owing — and when the style of the nobility is imitated with the limited means of "the gentry" it can only be owing — to the fact of the mistress working harder and persevering longer than any servant to be hired for



money, to say nothing of high-life-below-stairs' extravagance and plunder — enough to unsettle and demoralise the whole establishment.

By the time Minnie was dressed to receive her guests she was almost worn out. The excitement only kept her up, and though both the master and the mistress contrived to entertain their friends with satisfaction to all, little did those friends think that Minnie was watching every course and every servant with nervous anxiety: still less did they imagine that Tom's heart all the time was wrung, and his mind distracted with painful intelligence, which he could with difficulty conceal from Minnie till the morrow.

Hard, indeed, was the struggle: yet the kind husband's resolution prevailed. Especially hard was it, because he had become used to go so naturally to Minnie for sympathy under every little annoyance, and she also had learned to read his every thought in the language of his eye or the lines of his expressive brow.

## CHAPTER XV.

HOW THIS LIFE HAS GREATER TRIALS THAN EVEN  
STUPID SERVANTS AND A COUNTRY DINNER-  
PARTY.

BEFORE Tom Langley laid his distracted head upon his pillow that night, a letter was put into his hand, which, though it left little hope, indeed, of Mr. Chester's affairs being satisfactorily arranged, gave him reason to delay explanations with Minnie.

An anxious man will always rush to the source whence the danger proceeds: he likes close quarters, and to see at least the true dimensions, if he cannot actually grapple with his foe.

Accordingly, Tom accepted an invitation in the neighbourhood of Shrimpton, glad enough to leave Minnie at daybreak, and thus to avoid the resistless scrutiny of her confiding look and melting eye. He had also a natural reluctance that all the fatigues of the party — far more severe than he ever thought to see her undergo — should

be so ruthlessly reft of even the pleasure of Mrs. Farren's congratulations, and gladdening report of the favourable judgment of the neighbourhood. How cruel that it should so soon be followed by the most painful shock the poor young creature had ever yet received in her life!

Mrs. Farren was not long in coming to Minnie, full of intelligence of how one of the party had admired this and how another gave her full credit for that. She assured her, in a word, that all was done as elegantly as it was possible to conceive.

Even the Rector sent a playful message, to show that he could sympathise in Minnie's victory—however little he thought of the importance of the strife; so, he told his wife to say, that he sincerely hoped that the vergers had officiated in true orthodox fashion.

\* \* \* \*

And now Tom has returned—the sad news has been broken to Minnie of the inevitable sale of all the furniture—that the estate had become the property of the mortgagees, and that her father and mother were reduced to go broken-hearted into a distant county and take up their abode with a relation.

We forbear the vain attempt to chronicle poor Minnie's sighs, or to wring the heart of the

reader with dwelling on her unavailing tears. Besides, there is something sacred in grief such as that of a child who weeps for her parent; or, that of a wife, who sorrows not for herself, but for the loss that falls upon a kind and affectionate husband.

Poor Minnie's allowance now was gone. She had felt a peculiar pleasure every quarter-day in rolling up and pelting Tom playfully with her fifty-pound check, and then helping herself from his purse whenever she wanted money, in all the charming confidence of pure affection. So heartily did she enjoy the feeling that there was no "yours and mine"—it was all "ours." One quarter's allowance had been some weeks due—these arrears had been more than once the subject of a jest; but now the remembrance was a serious one, indeed. This debt was never to be paid, and the fountain even of this little golden stream, she now painfully felt, must cease for ever!

In all great troubles, however various and embarrassing our perplexities, there is always one point, often seemingly a small one, which seizes chiefly on the mind and sharpens the sting of misery. With Minnie it was the ever recurring quarter-day and no allowance. Add this, she had a high sense of honour, and To

saw that — lightly as he so generously made of 200*l.* a-year gone at one blow!—Minnie could not but feel that, when her father made the promise of an allowance, he must have known at the time that he was deluding her husband by an engagement he never could fulfil, and thereby leading him into a scale of expense which he could not prudently maintain.

## CHAPTER XVI.

HOW SOME GREAT PEOPLE COME TO GRIEF, AND  
HOW SOME LITTLE PEOPLE TAKE AN INVENTORY  
OF THEIR DEFECTS.

THERE is no sight more suggestive of grave and instructive thoughts than a "peremptory sale," which not unfrequently means a sale under execution, in the mansion of an old county family.

THE day the effects were on view, Tom Langley entered the hall with very painful feelings.

EVEN a stranger can hardly look on wholly without emotion. There is something in a long-established English home that inspires respect and veneration. Though the chambers are not haunted by the ghosts of bygone generations, still, sacred memories seem to linger there, and old associations make these chambers almost friends and living things, and the old hall generally conjures up feelings of a solemn kir

So often has every room been hallowed by the prayers sent forth from the depths of heart-wrung misery — so often has it resounded with the voice of joy or the cries of infancy — so often has it been consecrated to the mourner's grief, and its shutters closed in unison with the darkness and the silence of death !

The furniture was old and respectable — venerable, we should say, for it seemed to have grown with the growth of successive lords, and to have gathered around them quite naturally in the course of years.

But now all was changed, or rather revolutionised. It caused quite a shock, and most painful feelings to behold it. The poor old house seemed profaned, insulted, ay, desecrated — there was a porter's coat hung as in heartless ridicule on a pilaster, and a shabby hat where the clock had been in the chimneypiece, was grotesquely reflected in the drawing-room glass — itself scribbled with chalk as " Lot No. 45."

Everything was so dragged from its place or thrown about, that the habitation seemed ruthlessly dismantled. The idea it conveyed was like that of a ship gone to pieces on the sands, or the torn and scattered branches of an old oak

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Tom said, that as he entered the house the

dirty porters, and the rough-looking farmers with their noisy and self-important wives, gave him the idea that the enemy had got in, and sack and pillage was going on.

In one sense the enemy were there indeed ; for curses, both loud and deep, were uttered by indignant creditors, doomed to wait, at all events, the law's delay, and for a small dividend after all. But there was also an enemy—there were no friendly feelings vented—of another kind.

"Such trumpery ! such barefaced impostors ! to have carried on such a game !" said Mrs. Biddle, a farmer's wife, blessed with a particularly flourishing and well-to-do exterior.

"To think that we ever touched our honest hats to such people !" said Yorkshire Bob, a horse-dealer in a small way, notorious for his success with "Screws," splints, and spavins.

"Yes, Robert," said a broker, "when, d'ye see, any time these last five years we could have bought up the whole lot of them with one pocket—couldn't we ?"

Tom Langley was particularly struck with the indignation of this kind, to which so many seemed to be giving utterance. He had never reflected upon the strange truth, that with some persons, even in the highest station,



stoop for interested motives to please the rich, the lower orders literally respect and worship money—that they think it no dishonour to be thrust aside, and to do servile homage to a man as long as he is believed to be rich; whereas “pauper” is in their ears a word of awful sound, and that to be called “beggar,” is almost as stinging a reproach as “thief.”

So, now that this lordly castle proved one huge, mendacious, and most hollow sham—now that hobnails could leave their mark upon their floors, and there was actually at that moment Peggy Holmes, of the chandler’s shop, pulling about the pots and pans in the kitchen, and Dame Ducks-and-Chickens thinking whether she should or should not carry off a faded screen, as a trophy and a memento of her own substantial superiority over such “make-believe humbugs,” to stand by the side of her own settle—here, indeed, was a discovery that made them all feel, and all talk, like deeply-injured individuals.

Tom naturally thought, and even remarked to some of them, that it could not possibly be any concern of theirs, nor was any wrong done any one but the creditors; and, perhaps, even they might eventually all receive their due.

But, it was impossible to reason the people

of Shrimpton into this view of the case. It was "so vexatious," they said, "to think they had been such fools all the time"—meaning, such fools as to treat a family as if they had money, when, in reality, they had none.

Indeed, there seemed to be one prevailing sense of disgust and disappointment. The truth was, they were angry with themselves: they had worshipped, as they thought, a golden idol, and the illusion had vanished before the sunbeams—their deity had proved too manifestly a thing of straw!

All this occurred early in the day.

At a place like Shrimpton it required no statute to separate the higher classes from the lower. The small shopkeepers and farmers' wives had come to a tacit understanding that they should feel more at home, more comfortable, while free to ramble about and make their remarks, and disappear altogether before the afternoon, when "the gentry would be coming."

And now Tom, having shaken off the few persons with whom he had been betrayed into no very pleasant conversation, began to muse and meditate, and to give full play to his more sombre feelings, as he roamed through the apartments, and compared the present with the past.

Before the portico, covered, of course, by

flaring bills—in which the name of Messrs. Sweetenhall, the auctioneers, had monopolised the most prominent type—at the very spot where he had so often seen some elegant chariots waiting, there now stood, tail foremost, a kind of Pickford's van. Straw was littered about everywhere ; the stair-carpet was standing rolled up on end, and the stair-rods, tied and ticketed, were lying in a corner.

Then, there was the dining-room table set out at full length, with all the glass and china, and contents of the pantry, set forth upon it ;—all was there, even down to the old-fashioned nutcrackers and a very scrubby-looking corkscrew, which, like a faithful old servant, had served the family to the very last cork they were ever to draw. To Tom's more modern ideas the things looked—as after thirty years' housekeeping they always do—like anything but a good match ; but no matter, they were all sorted out into “lots,” and would henceforth figure, many of them, in some farmer's corner-cupboard ; and some, perhaps, would make up for the breakages of the Waldens or the Mertons.

All this was taken in almost at a glance, and then Tom hastened away past the library—wanted nothing there ; past the drawing-room—there, also, his curiosity could have a

little patience; but he did not stop to look at anything, till he found himself in the same little boudoir at which Minnie had cast her last long look, as she left the home of her maiden years on her bridal morning.

As Tom Langley threw open the door, in the full confidence of being here, at least, left for a while alone, he ran against Jenny Mills, who had once been Minnie's nurse, and had long since been married and settled at a small farm in the neighbourhood, and had, ever since the days of her service, enjoyed no little honour reflected from the family of Squire Chester, and had also enjoyed all that protection and assistance which a county family has so many opportunities of extending to their humble friends.

Tom had given Jenny a new gown on the occasion of the wedding; for Minnie had taken him across to the farm to entertain nurse with comparisons of "Now and Then," and to realise the satisfaction of seeing some one to whom she could say in plain, bold English, "Now, look at this gentleman, nurse: this is my husband that is to be."

At the sight of Tom the poor woman grasped his hand in the genuine familiarity of grief, and then melted into tears. Then, as soon as she could give utterance to her feelings, she said,-

“ I have been thinking of you, Mr. Langley, all this sad, heart-breaking morning : but you *will* be kind to her—won’t you, sir—now, just the same?—She’s a good, dear child, and really she didn’t know a word about it—that she didn’t!—Blame me, if you will, sir ; for I never said a word to her—though, to tell the truth, I had looked for it all along, ever since Michaelmas was a twelvemonth.”

Tom squeezed the good woman’s hand sympathetically, and reassured her by his looks ; and, after a while, he told her that, as she had not yet seen “ her own child ” in her own new home, she must one day come over to Langley Hall, and that would help to cheer Minnie up.

And then he looked round to pencil down the number of her narrow bed, her writing-table, and any little thing that seemed likely to be endeared by use, and which he could not bear to pass into the hands of the stranger. And with this kind purpose in view Tom looked through all the house, offices and garden, noting down for purchase many a little memorial of Minnie’s childhood, or the handy-work of her later years : and so time passed on, when all of a sudden, as he was wandering in the garden lost in his own sad reflections, he saw a carriage driving up the coach-road. But

he had little inclination to encounter Minnie's former friends, or to risk the nature of their remarks, so he took his departure across the fields, and that evening returned to comfort his disconsolate Minnie.

## CHAPTER XVII.

HOW PEOPLE MAY KEEP ON TALKING ONE WAY  
WHILE THEY KEEP ON GOING THE OTHER.

WHEN Tom returned, he found Minnie in a very painful state of mind. This was her first great sorrow, and it was associated in her mind with dishonour and disgrace. The idea had taken possession of her mind that her father owed more money than he had wherewithal to pay—then, of course, he had actually received and enjoyed the tradesman's goods, and the poor man, perhaps in distress at that moment, was defrauded of his property, and had nothing in return!

To Minnie's unsophisticated feelings this looked so much like offences for which she had heard of persons being tried at the assize-time, that it produced a deep impression and a settled melancholy on her mind.

Perhaps, there are few persons who cannot remember a time—and well is it for those to whom that season of pure and righteous thought

has never been counted among the past—when “debt” and “dishonesty” were two words very intimately associated; two words which always produced a very similar impression on their minds.

Tom thought at first that the chief cause of Minnie’s melancholy was the loss of the allowance of 200*l.* a-year. This, indeed, was no trifling loss to him. He had lately received his banker’s book, and had found that wedding expenses, diamond hoop-ring, and other presents, with all the money spent during the wedding tour—and never in a man’s life does money fly with much less care or calculation—that this, added to charges for furnishing, and the innumerable expenses, great and small, involved in the very name of settling down and beginning housekeeping—that all these various items had mounted up to a figure, higher by a great deal than his very flattering kind of mental arithmetic had ever led him to expect.

The loss of this extra 200*l.* a-year, supposed to be forthcoming as regularly as the quarter-day from the Chester side, was, therefore, really by no means inconsiderable. Still, he affected to make light of it, and told Minnie not to trouble herself about trifles. Indeed, he was not so to get rid of the subject, as one with which



found it particularly hard to preserve his equanimity if once he entered upon the subject—That Minnie's father was an old rogue, and that Minnie's mother was no better, was Tom's undisguised and deliberate opinion. What did they mean by pressing upon his notice again and again that Minnie was an only child, unless to assure him, by implication at least, that the estate of the Chesters must one day be hers?

Then, as to the stipulated allowance, it was both an insult and an injury: so manifestly was it a mere bait—a sprat to catch a herring; for, it was obvious that without some such colourable piece of decency, not to say liberality, on their part, they could hardly have required a settlement from him!

These reflections annoyed Tom very much. The anonymous letters, after all, seemed true. He had been, indeed, a *dupe*! And now, for the first time, he understood the covert meaning of certain expressions which these letters contained, about "having a little more of the Chesters than he bargained for"—which, no doubt, implied that the bed, board, and lodging of the old people were expenses pretty sure to fall upon him! And even this, perhaps, he was wily to escape.

Still, as regarded his dear Minnie, whom

he justly believed to be the very soul of integrity and truth, to betray the real state of his mind to her, he felt would be cruelty indeed.— Still, once or twice his disgust and indignation had all but betrayed itself, and that in no measured terms.

To conceal our feelings, when irritated and excited, from a wife, in whom we habitually confide, is no easy matter, the power of habit is so strong : besides which, a wife is present all times and all seasons, in the moments of our weakness and displeasure, as well as in the hours of our serenity and strength.

And it is this extreme difficulty of wearing any company suit of manners all the day long that produces so much disappointment in married life. A long sea-voyage is the only known opportunity for test and trial of disposition by any means to be compared with the conjugal state. For, in general society we are like actors on the stage. The man who has literally personified "the Provoked Husband" all the morning, walks into the drawing-room the very picture of "the Good-natured Man," linked arm-in-arm, most tenderly, with the very wife with whom he has been quarrelling in the marriage ; and then, after supporting this awkward character to perfection from six o'clock to

he goes on with the old standing grievance all the way home.

Audrey did all he could to pacify Tom, and to reconcile him to his lot. He said there was no knowing what might turn up in his favour! Still, he went as far as he could to point out to him, that a little economy was the best means to make up for the loss.

Minnie was still perplexed and astonished to hear no kind of observations on that dark view of the case that was so truly painful to her. With every allowance for a mode of speech attuned and tempered to a daughter's feelings, she still felt that the idea that was uppermost was "the loss of the Chesters"—"the breaking up of the old county family;" whereas, the reflection so bitter to her, that they owed money and had not to pay, seemed passed over merely as so much bad management—as the way of the world and as part of the common lot and ventures of trade.

This view of the late disaster in her family astonished Minnie exceedingly: for, she had a very lively recollection of the scruples of conscience, and the strong instinct that whispered, No! when, as a child, she took upon trust a ke from a basket-woman, for which small pittance in possession the next week's sixpence in

expectancy seemed a very unnatural and one-sided contract.

Before many days had passed away, Minnie found an opportunity of "consulting the Oracle," as she called it—that is, of conferring on this subject with the Rector.

Of course, there is a very obvious mode of proposing a mere abstract question for solution; still, be as careful as she would, the Rector never doubted for a moment that the late trying occurrence in Minnie's fortune had really suggested the subject of debate.

The Rector mused very thoughtfully, and seemed buried for a while in the depths of his own reflections, when Minnie so artlessly described the healthful instincts of the child the first time she was tempted to go in debt to the extent of sixpence for a cake.

"Mrs. Langley," said the Rector, "one of the most painful reflections to any thinking mind is to find, amidst the wear and tear of this heartless world of self-deceit, how insensibly we deteriorate and recede from the pure intentions of the child."

"And you think my natural aversion to run in debt for my sixpence is a case point?"

"Undoubtedly I do. And I can most

cerely say, Would that my own aversion at this moment to that habit of debt, which Dr. Johnson truly said 'renders all virtues difficult, and some impossible'—would that it had still the strength of my childish days!"

"But do I not hear it said that all commerce must require credit?"

"True; but the arrangements of commerce are quite another thing. Men of business sometimes charge for the risk of credit, and, as it were, agree for an insurance price; but, between gentlemen and their tradesmen—between men of fixed and definite income, and those whom I have so often seen in this parish distressed by their failure—the case is wholly different."

"Then," said Minnie, sorrowfully, "you regard such debt as downright dishonesty?"

The Rector now began to feel that, in the earnest pursuit of his argument, he had forgotten the obvious application to poor Minnie's parents, and their late disaster. It was time, therefore, to look to the fairer side of the question; as far, indeed, as he could do without any compromise of truth.

He replied, therefore,—

"The worst part of dishonesty—and, indeed, the very essence of it—is the deliberate intention to defraud: now, in the case of the

debtor, there is often a highly culpable, indeed, a most fatal and mischievous carelessness, where the same person would be utterly incapable of direct and wilful dishonesty."

"Then," said Minnie, "in spite of your well-known care and punctuality in all your payments—indeed, Mrs. Farren says you are quite a fidget in such matters—still you confess that you do feel that you have not the same ——"

"Not the same healthful instinct, not the same instinctive aversion, that I had in the days of my childhood. But why should I seek terms and figures of speech from the feeble armoury of my own invention? Let us go at once to Scripture: the idea is there expressed true to life; namely, where we read that we 'must become as little children'—we must recover that artless simplicity, which is overlaid and lost amidst all the fallacies of later life."

By this time Tom Langley had gradually drawn near, and had begun to take a part in this instructive debate, which proceeded as follows:—

*Tom Langley.* "I begin to suspect, Minnie, that Mr. Farren has been a bad boy in his day. His college doings we have not yet heard: perhaps his confessions would be rather instructive; for I hear that all college youths leave debt."

*Minnie.* "Yes, and Mr. Effingham admitted it sometimes took years to pay them off."

*Rector.* "There is too much truth in that : still, as regards myself, I had no debts but were easily paid : notwithstanding, there is one thing contracted at college that has stuck to me through life."

*Minnie.* "And what is that ?"

*Rector.* "Why, the very thing which your first observation suggested—the habit of debt ; in other words, I went to college with a natural aversion to debt : but there is no place like Oxford or Cambridge to deaden that wholesome feeling in the breast."

*Tom Langley.* "Then you agree with the suggestion that credit should be stopped, a young man's hands tied, and debt at college peremptorily forbidden ?"

*Rector.* "Certainly not : that were neither practicable, nor at all desirable. A young man at college is old enough to walk without leading-strings—to swim without corks—or he will be sure to founder in the rough waters of after-life."

*Tom Langley.* "Then you agree that some of the plans suggested to stop debt at college worthy attention ?"

*Rector.* "Not one single plan that I have ever heard suggested would do anything else

than make bad worse : still, were I the President of a college, I could do something effectual, I am quite sure."

*Tom Langley.* "Now, then, for your addition to college statutes."

*Rector.* "No law, no statute will meet the case."

*Tom Langley.* "What then?"

*Rector.* "I would proceed as follows :—I would speak, not magisterially, but kindly, to every youth as he entered. I would explain that the habit of debt was the point to be regarded—I would enforce the influence on after life that would result from scrupulous avoidance of debt during college days, with a fixed and certain income—that the management of his little income was a difficulty in which I should be happy to assist, and show him how to square his allowance with each term ; and by mere tact and friendly influence—for any measures inquisitorial would be absurd—I doubt not but almost all youths of the class that go to college would thankfully accept so reasonable a proposal."

*Tom Langley.* "But would they all like this?"

*Rector.* "Some would be thus induced to take a pride in owing not a single penny. thoughtless would be saved from any great barrassments ; and only the vicious—not n—would ever be deeply involved."



*Minnie.* "Then you will be charmed, Mr. Farren, with the anecdote told of the wisdom exemplified in the education of the Princess Victoria—how the one box more than she had money to buy at Tunbridge Wells was not allowed to be sent home till she had waited till the quarter-day, and then took the money to redeem it!"

*Tom Langley.* "But that seemed such a trifling matter, sir."

*Rector.* "'Yes, but habit is not a trifling matter,' as Plato once replied to a similar remark.—Would that there were more instances of the same extreme care: for, were all young persons equally trained on no account to touch or handle anything till they had left the money in its place, no small part of the misery of life might, by such early training, be avoided."

The Rector now suddenly — quite abruptly — changed the subject of conversation, lest Tom and Minnie should suspect that it was intended for their express edification. For, well he knew that one way to lose all kind of salutary influence over any young persons was to speak save from the well-spring of truth and nature; and less did he forget that the best advice, when of season, served only to irritate the mind in which it might otherwise prevail.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW TOM LANGLEY FINDS THAT NOTHING IS SO  
EXPENSIVE AS "APPEARANCES," AND HOW HE  
BECOMES QUITE AN ALTERED CHARACTER.

WHEN Tom Langley found himself alone he was painfully conscious, as he nervously ran his eye through the entries in his pass-book, that not all the wisdom in the world, nor indeed all the resolution to amend, could ever make the "credits" on the one page greater, nor the "debits" on the other less.

There is nothing by any means sympathetic — nothing at all flattering in figures: your Banker may be all very polite and courteous — though nine Bankers out of ten look as if they lived on the defensive, and as if, in the language of photography, they could be Positives and Negatives at the same time — still as to those who are least of the pachydermatous species, or, of the porcupine temperament, the moment (hand you your account, they certainly pres

a black-and-white register of all your little follies, the smart remaining when the pleasure's gone — of a kind wholly without parallel in the other dealings of what Homer calls —

“The race of *plainly-speaking* men.”

“Really,” said Tom to Minnie, as a very natural observation on the entries and the dates in his pass-book, “you would not believe how fond everybody is of money. Now, there's a man like Holland, rolling in riches: I paid him ten pounds for that cart I bought on the first of the month, and I declare he must have drawn the money the very next day. Yes, and there is old Mrs. Tremlett with that five-pound check — why, she must have sent off her maid for cash directly she received it.”

Tom, like others, had yet to learn, that money, whether wanted or not, was the same interesting commodity to every one else that it was to himself.

Talk of mementos — of forget-me-nots — of pocket-photographs, and the like! Only borrow five pounds of a man without paying him, and he will never forget you till your dying day!

It soon became evident to Tom that he had been living rather fast: still, he consoled himself by thinking that the first year went for

nothing ; " slips go again," as he used to say at school : and as to retrenching, the present certainly was not the time for it—the present seldom is—it would cause observation, and all Brendon would say that he could not get on without the Chester contributions.

Besides, there were so many things he *must* do. He must hunt, however seldom, for appearance—he must shoot, for something to do—he must entertain the field when there was a meet at " Brendon Toll-bar," because Langley Hall always had that honour—and if he only gave half a chance of volunteering, the Butterworths or the Holloways would be but too glad of such an opportunity of propping up their county standing, and showing off an array of tankards and salvers, looking like an importation from Elkington's shop.

There were also certain county subscriptions that he must keep up : because Langley Hall—never mind how much richer Langley Hall was at the time—had always paid those subscriptions : and how could he endure that his little principality should sink down to the position of a third or fourth-rate power ?

Langley Hall, therefore, proved to be by means of the nature of an unencumbered estate. For, besides keeping up men-servants a

maid-servants, horses and dogs, gardens and lawns, Tom found that in his old family establishment one of the most expensive things to keep up was — Appearances.

The question, therefore, to be solved, and solved immediately, was, how to raise some money. No sooner did he reflect on this than some of Sir Edward's sarcastic remarks flashed across his mind. His liberty was fettered, no doubt. There was no power of borrowing on the estate: "How black the trustees would look!" he said to himself—"old Dame Chester's cousin especially, if I were to mention such a thing: still, I have the consols to do as I like with, so I suppose that I must sell some of them."

Tom had never sold out any of his capital before. There was something very ominous in the sound of it. How it was done exactly he did not know, and he went to the bank to make inquiry.

Now, it may seem very strange, seeing that Tom was his own master, and considering that this was all his own money, if we say that Tom Langley felt positively uneasy and nervous on the occasion, and heartily wished that somebody else had to do it instead of himself. He felt he was making a confession of weakness to the

banker and all the clerks — he only hoped they might be trusted not to tell. He also anticipated some little difficulty with lawyers' formalities and delay.

When he entered the Arminster Bank, therefore, he began with a little explanation — he talked about the expenses of his first year with furnishing, and so he was running on with a little justification of his own ruinous intentions, when Mr. Scriven, the cashier, in the way of shortening the business, put in —

“And therefore, naturally, you would instruct us to sell some stock?”

“Then you can assist me in selling out, can you?”

“Yes, certainly; our broker in town will sell immediately — a matter of daily occurrence.”

By this time Mr. Scriven had taken up a pen and a slip of paper, and then continued —

“How much shall I say?”

“Why, I think I had better say 500*l*.”

Mr. Scriven wrote — “*To sell — as much stock — as will — produce 500*l*. — the designation and particulars we have in our own books.*” He then asked, —

“Shall I write for a *general* power, Langley? By that means we can at any ti

sell out sums, however small, with little trouble or expense."

Tom thought that would be advisable.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Scriven, "please to look in by Wednesday to sign the power of attorney, and by Saturday we shall receive the proceeds of the sale."

"Really," said Tom, "this seems a very easy arrangement."

"Particularly so, sir," said Mr. Scriven. "This is what has been termed 'the elegant simplicity of the Three per Cents.' Why, to raise 500*l.* on land would have taken six months, perhaps, and cost 50*l.*!"

"Wonderfully simple, indeed!" said Tom. "So, on Saturday I can draw upon the 500*l.*?"

"The matter is a great deal simpler and more rapid still, if you will allow me," said Mr. Scriven. "You can take the 500*l.* as at your credit from this moment, if you please, sir—only for a small commission—a mere trifle, sir."

Tom thanked him for his truly accommodating offer, and went his way quite charmed and delighted. With so painless an operation he had little reason to fear having recourse to the same means of raising a little money again.

The thoughtful and experienced man of the

world will see that Tom had, either for evil or for good, done two very serious things on the same day :

First, he had broken the ice—he had overcome all scruples of selling out his capital ; and,

Secondly, he had learnt that, by simply writing to his banker to raise him so many hundreds of pounds, the money became hocus-pocussed into being and existence by the very scratch of his pen—in other words, he could draw upon his capital in the same way that he drew for his dividends ; leaving whatever was crooked in the operation for the banker to put straight.

Now seeing, as King John says,—

“ How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds  
Makes ill deeds done,”

perchance this may prove to be rather an eventful day in the history of Thomas Langley, Esq. of Langley Hall.

It will easily be understood that the newly-married man was undergoing a complete metamorphosis, as regarded not only his church-going habits—his early hours—changing his bachelor acquaintance for that of staid steady family people—as also his entertain such a party as, only one year before, he sho



have numbered with "the old fogies" and the slows—no, this was not the only change that was insensibly stealing over Tom Langley ; his feelings and views of things were also becoming changed. The Rector looked on and saw it all. He smiled with inward satisfaction, and partly, too, did he smile from the consciousness that he saw so much further than other persons.

A child laughs with delight when he has guessed the riddle or solved the puzzle: the Rector felt precisely the same kind of pleasure in applying the clue of Scripture and experience to the mysteries and enigmas of life.

He said the young man was passing away—the new character was forming: he was being steadied by increasing responsibilities. He was casting the slough of selfishness and folly—throwing off the boy and growing into the man: so, divers childish practices and early vices were falling away of themselves—yes, it was precisely the case of the tree: Minnie was the cause of new leaves which effectually thrust away the old.

Again, the life of passion was going off, the life of sober action was coming on; and the Rector was quite wise enough to see that all the excitement of the Chester insolvency and sale answered every purpose of Tattersall's and the

Derby. No doubt Tom's uneasiness and relief about his bank account gave him quite as much to think of as balls and operas, and all the excitement of a London Season.

What a strange life for Tom to lead, after all the self-will and indulgence of the Albany! No longer at the mercy of every gust of caprice, he trims his sails to catch the steady breeze of duty, or the softer gales of Minnie's love and tender aspirations for their common welfare. Why, here was Tom Langley actually choking down his rising indignation against the Chesters, and—for the first time his heart had ever known such compromise, or such a struggle—the place of hatred and resentment had yielded forcible possession to feelings of kindly consideration, tenderness, and love!

No, whether he was richer or poorer, Tom magnanimously resolved that his Minnie's mind should never be disturbed by seeing the least difference in point of comfort or convenience in her house or establishment—not, at least, for some time to come.

Still, with all his kindness, Tom could not help seeing that his dear wife's mind was by no means at ease. She rarely talked of money; his presence—she was far less punctual in giving attention to the bills, as if it were a sub

she would avoid as long as she could ; and she proposed nothing which involved unnecessary expense.

All this time Minnie would gladly have been economical if she had known how ; but it was impossible to keep within the limits of an income of which she lived utterly in doubt : and she bitterly regretted, in a letter to Charlotte Mildmay, that she now lived not without the feelings of a dependant—it might be wrong : it might be foolish, but she could not overcome it—and nothing would make her more happy than if any piece of good fortune could make her feel that she added her fair contingent and contribution to the common home.

This letter contained also an intimation of another kind—the most interesting, by far, which any youthful wife can ever have the happiness to announce to a lady friend.

Charlotte soon replied, that all Minnie's scruples of conscience were quite unnecessary—that “for richer for poorer” was the contract—that man was the bread-winner, while it was enough for the wife to comfort, to economise, and to dispense.

But no letter from Charlotte's pen ever ran in a deadly-lively, or serious strain, one line further than was absolutely necessary. She soon,

therefore, changed her strain to a more lively measure, and remarked, that good fortune dropped in sometimes as unexpectedly as bad, and no one could tell what ten or twelve years might produce ; and that, meanwhile, if Minnie only had the same interesting announcement to make each succeeding year as her letter contained—why, then, she would have the satisfaction of affording as handsome a contingent as any husband could possibly desire.

## CHAPTER XIX.

HOW TOM SHOWS CONSIDERABLE KNOWLEDGE OF  
HUMAN NATURE, AND GROWS QUITE A FAMILY  
MAN.

BETWEEN the occurrences last described and our next visit and tour of observation at Langley Hall six years had passed away.

As we entered the garden we met a woman with that peculiar kind of figure which speaks of sedentary habits and late hours so prominently, that at once we knew it was the nurse, and as this important-looking character turned round she proved to have an infant in her arms.

"Miss Sophia, sir, this is," she said, in answer to our inquiry; "that young gentleman there," pointing to a boy of about five years old, with a child's spade and little wheelbarrow—"is Master William Mildmay Langley, named after his godmother; the next to him was a girl—as pretty a little dear as any of the family—but she lies over there, just where the roses are so pretty—next the gate there," pointing to the

churchyard ; “ and Miss Julia, who is three next November, is in-doors with measles : but these two have had it favourable.”

In other words, our friends Tom and Minnie were fully experienced in all the cares as well as the pleasures of married life.

Minnie once most feelingly assured us, that until she had seen her cot left empty and the coffin-lid closed on her pretty darling—not one look more allowed—closed, yes, closed for ever—it seemed as if there was one form and phase of human life which she had never yet gone through. After that, all cares seemed trifling ; balls and archery ranked as childish toys—many an illusion cleared away, she lived in a new world—a world of reality and fact.

Tom was wonderfully sobered by it. “ Master took on about it,” said the nurse, “ pretty near as much as missus.” He let nearly all the shooting season go by, and could hardly bear to have the other children out of his sight. Indeed, all his dogs and all his horses, in their most engrossing days, were never half as interesting as these children were now : and he innocently related to us that, to his great surprise, where he used to go into the stable once, he now for himself going into the nursery, at the very least three times.

It was observable that Tom Langley's whole walk and carriage were quite different from what they used to be. You would have thought he had all the family on his back, and that he was going about foraging how to feed them. Indeed, all his thoughts and all his plans seemed to turn on these three children. They were the pivot of his very existence: and when we asked him if he had been to the seaside that year, he said, "No—these are like three anchors from my bow: they hold me fast and keep me steady. I could not afford to go to the seaside: I was obliged to let the hooping-cough do instead."

So wonderful was the change that had come over this once self-willed and independent man.

First of all, his wife managed him as with a snaffle, and now these children were leading him by a silken thread. The Rector called this "being led *by the cords of a man*. The chains of sin had been replaced by the bonds of affection and of love."

Tom Langley soon appeared to be in that stage of earnest life in which a few trifling realities and matters of duty take the place and fill up all the room which, early in life, is occupied by the most costly and the most fashionable of our boasted pleasures.

For instance, he thought a great deal of little

local offices, and was quite in a hurry to tell us what a busy man he had been in the parish. He had backed up the Rector through thick and thin. (Tom was the Rector's churchwarden.) The consequence of his inflexibility was, that he was very unpopular for a year.

"But now," he said, "of course you have heard what has happened?"

"No."

"Then I must tell you all about it, for we have turned the laugh against them quite."

Whereupon he told us a story which—by no means a bad one in itself, and serving also still further to illustrate the state of things at Brendon and the indirect operation of the Rector's favourite theory—we will here introduce.

"Well, then, to begin at the beginning," said Tom Langley, "these country-houses seem, as regards the ladies, to bear on their very porticos the awful words, 'Who enters here must give up hope.' In the Moslem's Paradise there are no ladies: but in our Brendon Paradise there is little else. Our 'new creations,' that is, the Birmingham school, marry off their daughters fast enough: because they most of them have money to help with, and all the rest have a connexion, and the means of making some. Mr. Cotton marries Miss Thread, Miss



marries Mr. Broadcloth, and so forth, on the principle of 'wheels within wheels:' then off the young couple go, back to the towns where all is brick with giant shafts, gurgling volleys of smoke, and are satisfied to look forward to the day when they can retire and come out grand, as their fathers have done before them.

"But with us it is quite different. At the Barnetts' there is only one daughter married out of four, and her they have been obliged almost to maintain, and have sent her off, as far as they can out of the way, to bury her pride and poverty in Wales. At the Armstrongs' there are two; at the Forsythes' three; and at——"

"Well, well, we understand you. You mean to say, that the sons are too poor to marry for love and the fathers can't afford to advance any money?"

"Yes, and for these and similar reasons we have heavy arrears of single ladies at Brendon."

"Well, and has not their conduct been always truly exemplary?"

"Wonderfully so. They did seem to be martyrs to a principle: all went on smoothly, and the doctrine of 'preventive checks' did seem to be a decided success; only, you have heard of a man who had almost taught his horse to live on nothing?"

"Certainly ; and when the valuable animal had come down to a straw a-day, unluckily he died."

"Something very similar occurred in this case. But, you know, I have long been acting churchwarden?"

"What can that have to do with your present matrimonial theory?"

"Why, a great deal, as you will hear. Lady Morgan talks of maternal instincts going astray. Of course, they must go somewhere ; and, after novels and crochet seemed to cloy, the Rector received an application to allow the ladies to practise on the organ in the church. They urged that our singing was vile—and so, indeed, it was—and they proposed to get up chants ; and, in short, to remodel the whole affair."

"And could you possibly refuse so reasonable a request?"

"The Rector was on the point of consenting, when I happened to hear that a very soft, sallow, and black-whiskered little man—a very favourite music-master among the ladies—was to be part and parcel of the bargain. So I mentioned my view of the case to the Rector."

"And what was his view of the case?"

"The Rector exclaimed in a moment,

see it! I see it, Mr. Langley! I look at the thing quite philosophically. Yes, so far I believe in the doctrine of 'Development.' All this, you mean to say, is sentimental and emotional, and we shall get into a scrape. Mr. Langley, this must not be."

"And what did the disappointed ladies do?"

"Abused us both for a year, having obtained from Mr. Watson, in the next parish, the accommodation which we refused."

"But did they not insist on knowing the cause of so strange a refusal?"

"That they did very soon, and a fine dilemma we were in. For, how could we hint at a result so derogatory to mention?"

"And, I suppose this interesting child of song has paid his addresses to one of them?"

"Yes, to the eldest Miss Barnett; and one fine morning the cage was empty and the bird was flown. One of the servants then proved to know all about it, and said, that to Gretna Green they were gone."

"And did either of you offer any assistance?"

"Yes, the Rector proposed at once to send his curate of the other parish after them, not to bring them back, but to see them safely carried."

“And what said the papa?”

“Old Barnett was uproarious at the notion of such a thing. He at once gave chase to bring them back. The idea of the Barnetts, as old as the Wars of the Roses, being allied to this son of an Arminster hairdresser—for such was his pedigree—was the sting that goaded him on. And a very pretty race they made of it!”

“Why, what is the distance?”

“Three days’ hard travelling,—her maid by special agreement riding bodkin all the way, grumbling and wishing many a time that she had never come. Near the borders of Scotland old Barnett had gained considerably; but hearing there that the gentleman had stopped to recruit and called for shaving water, he said, ‘Now, I am done. If he takes it so easy he has it all his own way, and I need not hurry.’”

“And what are the happy couple to do?”

“There is some plan to establish them as far out of sight as possible. The hairdresser family made sure that they should visit the Barnetts, and made some advances—with what result you may guess.”

“But surely,” we rejoined, “there must be bad management somewhere for these things to happen?”

“Yes,” said Tom, “they carry things too far. The new families would be proud to intermarry with the old—but a line is drawn—and every now and then they do worse: and disgrace is the result.”

Such was Tom Langley’s latest piece of Brendon intelligence.

During this visit, we could not but observe that all seemed close and economical within-doors, and altogether out of proportion with things without. A coachman and footman to wear the Langley liveries they *must* have; costly worked robes for the baby, to look a little like other Brendon babies, they *must* have; in short, they *must* have everything for show and appearance, everything, to appear as prosperous as was expected of the Langleys, and, indeed, rather more so—all this they *must* have: but as to their own personal comforts—after the pains and penalties of a few successive Christmas reckonings, and more attacks upon the Consols—“I can’t afford it” had become quite a household word in Langley Hall.

There is no want of self-denial in this world. There is one kind of self that almost all men eny and persecute cruelly. Tom’s everyday self—his self domestic, it was easy to see he ad now no mercy on. He was putting that

self aside and sacrificing it to the out-door self; or, the self to exist in the opinions of other persons—he was sacrificing Tom Langley bodily to the ghost and shadow of an imaginary Langley, and that with a degree of endurance and magnanimity worthy of a better cause.

This was apparent in many little ways. They had early dinners, for the whole household to dine at once. There was an every-day description of wine, and not much of that. Tom's boots were now bought much nearer home than Hoby's. Tom's best coat only could boast of a West-end cut; and now the coach-horses were made to serve for saddle too; and, as for trips to town to keep up with the Opera, or even going to Ascot and the Derby—these indispensable conditions of a stylish man's existence had one by one dropped off.

Shall we state the "slow," prosaic reason?

It was not that Tom Langley liked these things less, but that he liked his wife and children—more! and since these were amusements which they could not enjoy with him, why, then, he did not quite say he would give them up; no, he only promised himself the greater pleasure of enjoying them in the company of those he loved at some future time.

Besides—must we confess it?—it is w

derful how a difficulty in paying for anything, or a certain nervous fingering of every sovereign, weans a man from pleasures where these scarce commodities fly fast enough to frighten him at every step he takes !

We observed that Tom now began to talk of making higher interest for his money ; and, therefore, we were not surprised afterwards to hear of a plan which Thomas Langley, like many another country gentleman, projected, and at a later period carried into busy operation — a kind of vocation which is so entertaining, in all its charming anticipations, and consequences, and so instructive in its course, that we will no longer delay to set it before the reader.

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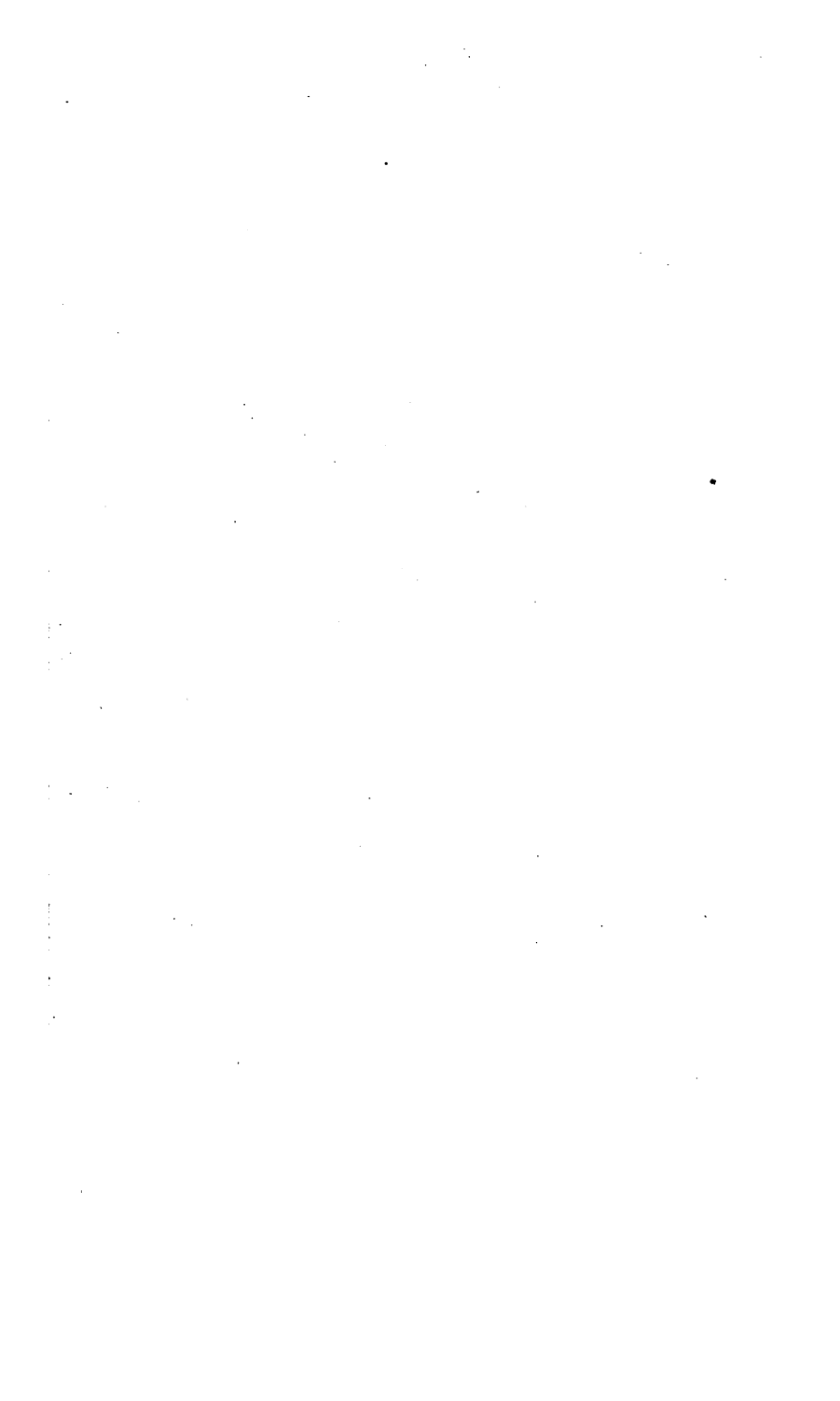
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